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# LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

WHO HAS FELT IT HIS DUTY

TO SECEDE FROM

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

AND WHO IMAGINES THAT THE

MIRACULOUS GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

ARE REVIVED AMONG THE SECEDERS.

BY

THE REV. HUGH M'NEILE, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ALBURY, SURREY.

"He that attacks received opinions with any thing but *fair arguments*, may be justly suspected not to mean well, nor to be led by the love of truth: the same may be said of him who so defends them."—LOCKE.



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## PREFACE.

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IF there be any thing worth contending for, in this world, it is true preparedness for leaving it. The dissipation for ever of all delusions, and the penetrating experience of things as they really are. The discovery that character is heaven; that character is hell: that every intelligent being carries in the recesses of his own bosom, the elements of everlasting communion with, or everlasting alienation from, the living God, the source and centre of all good, and all joy—these things are at the door, on the winged messengers of accident, disease, and decay. And what *then*? What then shall be thought of all the struggles of human ambition, all the glittering distinctions of human rank, all the



heart-burnings of human rivalry? What then shall be thought of all human institutions, and all human oppositions, and all the earnestness of human controversy?

O how infinitely insignificant will all appear, *save only as they have helped or hindered preparedness for eternity*. In this connexion, things in themselves trifling become unspeakably important. Institutions, which if rested in as ends, are worse than nothing, and lighter than vanity, when used as passing means, become angels of mercy, conducting to realms of light and glory.

We are yet in a body of infirmity, and surrounded by a world of infirmity. Means are indispensable; and therefore human institutions, as affording the supply of means, and the opportunities of using them. To defend such institutions, though subject to the common infirmity, is a christian duty. A faithful and discriminating performance of this duty, in times like the present, demands energy, and independence of mind; because it incurs obloquy and reproach, and because there is an active class of clamorous objectors,

who if they can retort upon *the man*, imagine, and make their readers imagine, that they have more than answered his *arguments*. The common refuges from this personality, are the anonymous columns of a newspaper or periodical. The writer of the following pages, is impressed with the conviction, that now is the time for those who are *sincerely* attached to our national church, boldly and personally to avow it.

“To support established institutions and existing systems; to defend these on the ground, not of their own perfection, but because, with all their admitted imperfections, they are preferable to the proposed reforms, is obviously not a task so easy, or so captivating, as the opposite course of attack. For, on this side of the question, over and above the want of enterprize, the common effect of possession, there prevails widely, even among the most pure-hearted men, the fear of the clamorous imputation of self-interest, a corrupt attachment to abuses, or, at the best, a stupid passion for antiquity. The defence, therefore, requires

not only greater discretion, but often greater courage, than the attack."—*Quarterly Review*. No. lxviii. p. 485.

Unquestionably, it requires greater courage to defend, than to attack the church of England, at the present crisis. The divine origin of her authority ; the scriptural soundness of her doctrines ; the spirituality and chastened fervor of her liturgy ; the calm and dignified sobriety of her worship ; and the barrier which, by this admirable combination, she has ever presented, against the overflowings of ungodliness and fanaticism ;—these are themes which provoke the sneer, and the shrug, and the self-complacent, but ignorant, exclamations of ‘bigotry,’ ‘priestcraft,’ ‘mental slavery,’ from the flippant, half-educated disciples of the new school. These persons, each of whom is wiser in his own eyes, than seven men who can give a reason, seem to identify true progress in wisdom and knowledge, with utter contempt of every thing which bears an earlier date than the reform bill. They have set up before their mind’s eye, a sort of beau

ideal of the "perfection of society," to be attained by the removal of all establishments of human government. As if the "materiel" of the human race were essentially good, and only required to be relieved from the pressure of crowns and mitres, to manifest its inherent excellence, and multiply, *ad infinitum*, its resources of rational happiness.

Do they forget, or do they deny, that the race is fallen; that its genuine character is "hateful and hating one another;" that the materiel has become evil in itself and in its tendencies, and absolutely demands the merciful coercion of establishments, to keep it from inflicting upon itself universal misery? Are they utterly impenetrable to the voice of experience, which proclaims, with reiterated clearness, that in ages and nations now no more, every opening which promised a clear course to perfection, such as they now anticipate, when seized upon by the sanguine, and for a time successful, led only, through the successive stages of civil war, to the establishment of a military monarchy?



Are they short-sighted enough not to see, that the union which at present prevails among their various bands, is kept up by the existence of establishments which they are united *against*: and that, if what they now deem their common enemy, were removed, they would turn and rend one another, in their pursuit of pre-eminence? Are they absurd enough to imagine, that there is, or ever can be, any *real* union between infidel radicalism and superstitious popery? Perfection! It is not a little remarkable, that the *far end* of all this boasted philosophy should thus identify itself with the vainest dream of enthusiasm—Utopia. In the general effect upon society, however, lightness is, in some degree, compensated by numbers. Herrings can choke a whale. Hornets can sting an ox to death. The instruction mania (for it does not deserve the name of education) has multiplied the buzzing tribe into shoals innumerable, and they rule the movement, in which fashion, interest and power, are now combined to make experiments.

That practical abuses, of a disgraceful character, have found their way into the administration of the church of England, abuses which ought, long since, to have been corrected, no well-informed and honest man will deny, and every true friend of that noble institution, will unfeignedly deplore. These abuses, however, are wilfully confounded, in one common censure with the institution itself; and because, there is good reason for the cry to *correct*, we hear on every side a growing, indiscriminating, and therein unreasonable cry, to *destroy*.

This cry is not confined to those who have long been without. It is now re-echoed by some, who till very lately have been within.

Among those who have recently seceded from the church, and are now, however unintentionally, adding the weight of their influence and example to the radical clamour against all constituted authority; there are men, whose constraining motive is not sectarian hostility, but conscientious zeal; not

party politics, but perverted religion. Some of them, uninstructed in the *aggregate* aspect of the visible church, and making the sum total of religion to consist in *individual* feeling, of which they presume to be judges, not only in themselves, but in their neighbours ; can, by no means, enter into the principle of enlarged charity upon which our church formularies are constructed, and, let me add, upon which the apostolical epistles are written. Others, filled with admiration of the predicted holiness and beauty of the *perfected* church of Christ, at the second advent of her Lord, and looking at this truth alone, to the neglect of present duties arising out of other portions of holy scripture ; have become impatient of human infirmity, and determined to have a holy company even now. Forgetful of what manner of spirit they are themselves, they have hastily seceded from the militant and imperfect church in which they were baptized, gone into diverse excesses of extravagant excitement, and denounce all who will not go with them.

To persons of both these descriptions, the attention of the writer of these letters has been forcibly and repeatedly attracted, during the last two years ; and in various instances, he has abundant reason to thank God, for the success which has attended the arguments contained in the following pages. That God may be graciously pleased to enlarge the measure of their success, as seemeth best to His infinite wisdom, is the author's sincere and earnest prayer, in committing them to the press.

He has refrained from details of a private nature ; though, by so doing, he has deprived his arguments (especially in Letters VII. and IX.) of much striking corroboration.

For his mention of individuals by name, his apology is two-fold. First, they have made themselves public in this secession ; and, secondly, he has not written anonymously.

He feels deeply, that the church of England is entitled to the affection and the defence of Englishmen—for these, among other reasons :



I. Because of the untold amount of happiness, which she has ministered, and does still minister, to the thousands of her true and faithful children, who enjoy and adorn her doctrines through life, and fall asleep in her bosom, at perfect peace with God and man, in Christ Jesus our Lord. The full evidence of this cannot, from the nature of the case, be protruded upon public notice. The modesty of real worth has become proverbial, as truly so, as the noisy forwardness of empty vanity. But in the great day of the revelation of secrets, the praises of the church of England will be read, in the private annals of families innumerable; who, in united affection to her, and one another, and in respectful attachment to their unpretending pastors, rendered the successive days and years of domestic life, a series of active duties, patient sufferings, and self-denying affectionate endearments. The acquaintance of the writer is limited, yet even within its scanty range, he has witnessed a wealth of piety and

peace, of calm contentment, and devoted affection, dear to his soul ; and he unfeignedly blesses God in the well founded assurance that the numbers of such instances are increasing.

II. Because the church of England has been, and is, the most faithful and efficient of all the witnesses, which have arisen against popery. By discriminating in her protest, and retaining the orders, offices, and formularies of the church, so far as they were not opposed to the word of God ; she has exhibited with detailed accuracy, and kept in everlasting remembrance, the boundary line of truth ; beyond which, the antichristian leaven of the mother of abominations, first corrupted, and then wholly neutralized, the simplicity of primitive Christianity. A comparison of her Common Prayer with the breviary and Mass Book of the Papists ; and of her Articles with the sections of the Council of Trent, will show at a glance, with what faithful precision she has tracked and wounded "the beast" at every winding.

III. Because the church of England has done good to them that deserted her, and many of whom spoke evil against her falsely and ungratefully. She has been a blessing to dissenters.

The nonconformist fathers acknowledged the obligation ; and for a long season, subscription to her doctrinal Articles was required from the candidates for their ministry. The history of those among them who discarded the salutary restraint, their socialism in doctrine, and dissensions in practice, when contrasted with the prolonged orthodoxy and union of their wiser, because more modest, brethren ; affords ample testimony to the pleasing fact, that the church has been, and is, returning good for evil.

IV. Because the church of England has been, and is, the bulwark of our limited monarchy, and free government. Alike opposed to despotism and democracy, she has shown the example, and inculcated the lesson, of true conscientious submission to the powers that be, as ordained of God,

without losing sight of the higher and paramount duty of faithfulness to the principles of revealed truth, and eternal unalterable justice. She has well distinguished between the office and the man; delegating to the former, a true and substantial authority, and holding the latter always responsible. This distinction is indispensable to true liberty, civil or religious. If substantial authority be not fully and confidently *delegated*, the nation (in theory, but in fact, the mob) must be its own executive; and this is democracy most wild and licentious. On the other hand, if the holders of authority be not *responsible* for its exercise; then, truth and equity, and religion, may be despised and trodden under foot by the executive: and this is despotism, most iron and barbarous. Responsible! to whom, or what? In the church to the Bible. In the state to the Law; and in both, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the *HEAD of both*. The Bible is the voice of the Lord, and therefore the ultimate and infallible standard of appeal. The Law is



the voice, not of proud man in power and interested to retain it, nor of envious, ambitious, or covetous man, out of power, and anxious to acquire it, even by means of which his conscience disapproves; but, of men, assembled, deliberating, judging, discriminating, and, in the end, enacting. It is therefore the result of collective wisdom; the extremes of individual opinion and feeling and prejudice and passion, being cut off, on either side: and the aggregate of what is sound, and sober, and wise in the assembly, being condensed in the enactment. It is not infallible, for after all it is human: but nothing else that is human approaches so near to what is infallible. It is true, that assemblies, nominally deliberative, have been known to clamour, in overwhelming majorities, for the enactment of what is palpably unjust. But these are rare exceptions of extra political excitement, scarcely deserving the name of legislation, and do not interfere with the general principle.

Dissent (I mean dissent as a *system*,

wherein, however, it is highly gratifying to be assured, that it differs widely from the sentiments of very many dissenters) refuses to delegate authority, and confide in the wisdom of ecclesiastical rulers. Consequently congregations are their own teachers, or (what amounts to the same thing) the dismissers of any minister who teaches them more than they choose to learn. This is democracy in religion. Popery refuses to hold her rulers responsible, even to the infallible word of God himself. This is despotism in religion. The church of England is a witness against both. She delegates substantial authority, thereby repressing congregational insurrection: and she invites, nay insists upon a perpetual appeal to the holy Scriptures, thereby effectually guarding against ecclesiastical tyranny. This is true religious liberty.

Thus, the church of England stands between two foes, not only to *her*, but to *the nation*: and there can be little reasonable doubt, but that the fall, from whatever

causes, of the church, as a national establishment—a conservative embankment—would be the signal for collision between the rising waters, and for the infliction, upon the nation, of a series of overwhelming mischiefs. And not upon the nation only, *as such*; but also upon the true members of the spiritual church of Christ, within the nation; who would as surely be involved in the common calamities of the community, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were in the Babylonish captivity of Israel; or the believing fugitives to Pella, in the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

*Albury Rectory, February, 1834.*

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# LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

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## LETTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

MY DEAR — —,

I HAVE received your letter. What you advance as argument carries no conviction to my mind ; but I quite agree with you when you say that “ unity without truth is not christian peace ; but on the contrary, a conspiracy against the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”

I love peace, and endeavour, as far as lieth in me, to live peaceably with all men : but I love truth even better than peace, and admire the spiritual heroism which urged

Luther to exclaim, "Let heaven and earth be blended in confusion, rather than a particle of gospel truth should be given up." Would to God the happy period were arrived, when truth and peace shall dwell together: when the glass being removed through which we now see darkly, we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known, and love even as we are loved: and when all our brethren in Christ, of various climes and churches and secessions, the elect of God from the four winds, shall know as we know, and love as we love! Blessed prospect! O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest!

But it may not yet be. Our Lord's intercession for us, for the present, is, not that we should be taken out of the world, but that we should be kept from the evil: the apostolical exhortation so strenuously pressed upon us all, is, that we should *earnestly contend* for the faith once delivered to the saints; and the promises of eternal life are emphatically made to "them that *endure* to the end." Controversy is inevitable. And in proportion as we are sincere and fervent, controversy

will be pressing. But let us remember always, that sound reasoning, with competent information upon the subject in debate, should give weight to our *matter*; and that meekness and moderation and modesty and love should be the unaffected characteristics of our *manner*. O! dear friend, let us evermore feel so truly grieved by the painful necessity of opposing one another, as to render it morally impossible for us to use harshness, or railing, or sarcasm in so doing.

For the most part, your appeal is to the written word of God, as the all-sufficient and final rule of *faith*. In this I very cordially agree. You cannot be more resolutely determined than I am, to maintain this fundamental principle of Protestantism, and to reject all commandments and traditions of men, *as doctrines to be believed for everlasting salvation*. On this point, I rejoice to think that we are all of one mind, and that our deliberate and unanimous judgment is fully and strongly expressed in the sixth article of the Church of England. *Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor*

*may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.*

There may indeed be some risk of adding fresh requirements of faith, by those who imagine that fresh inspiration is given in our days, so plenary and direct as to supersede any accompanying exercise of human fallible reason. But this risk does not attach to us, who remain conscientious members of the Church of England; but to you and your companions in separation. And truly, your letter contains intimations, darkly and mystically expressed indeed, yet sufficiently alarming, and no less inconsistent than alarming, of God being *above his word*, and of the *voice of God*, rendering any further reference, not only needless, but infidel.

I am willing, nay anxious, to believe that these expressions are but the phrases of the party which you have unhappily joined, and that you do not really *mean* what they convey. It may be of the utmost benefit to you, to have your attention directed to this point, before you go forward in your present

path; for *as yet* your direct and unequivocal, and obviously honest appeals, are to the holy Scriptures only.

The points of difference between us are various; but they all hinge upon the authority of the christian church which you once fully and scripturally admitted; and the supposed paramount authority of certain utterances, to which you now yield, even to the renunciation of your former opinion, and the casting away of your former allegiance. I have heard you defend the ordinances of the church, and condemn the sin of schism; but now, what was sin in your eyes has become duty, and what you once esteemed as a duty, you now condemn in me as a sin.

Upon these points it is my purpose to write you a few letters, as I shall be able to command time from my professional and other occupations: and, with the honesty of a friend who is convinced you are in error, and the affectionate earnestness of a brother in Christ, who loves you and desires your present happiness and eternal salvation, I entreat your candid attention. Scriptural argumentation, reasonable deduction, affection-

ate persuasion, faithful remonstrance—these are my only weapons in this warfare; and, believing that the cause which I defend is the cause of truth, I implore the God of truth, of reason, of holiness, of love, to render these weapons mighty, by the secret all-pervading energy of the Holy Ghost.

I am faithfully yours.



## LETTER II.

THE SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY OF THE CIVIL  
RULER.

MY DEAR —,

ARE we, or are we not, under a *scriptural* obligation to submit to the ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake?

This question includes both *civil* and *ecclesiastical* ordinances. These are in some respects distinct subjects, and I shall endeavour to mark that distinction. But the same *principle* applies to both, and they may with profitable clearness be considered together, as we find them in the word of God.

In the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we are thus instructed by St. Paul: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of



God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

This is precise as regards the *civil* ruler. The power which he possesses is not arrogated of man, but ordained of God; and therefore submission is inculcated, not merely to avoid the wrath of man, but also as a matter of conscience towards God. The apostle Peter, in like manner, combines the Subject with the Christian, upon the only principle which can make loyalty a religious duty. He says, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whe-*

*ther it be to the king as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. And in speaking of the unjust whom God reserves unto the day of judgment to be punished, he thus describes them, in words which maintain a closer connexion between religion and politics, than it accords with the temper of these times to admit. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished, but chiefly, among the various classes of the unjust who are all put in contradistinction to the godly, them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and* DESPISE GOVERNMENT. *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.\**

The apostolical description of the ruling power, as the minister of God, *a terror not to good works, but to the evil*, applies to the ordinance itself, and not to the personal character of the individual man or men, by whom the ordinance is administered. When

\* 1 Peter ii. 13, 14, and 2 Peter ii. 9, 10.

the apostles gave these instructions to the christian church, the administration of the ordinance of government was in the hands of the Emperor Nero, who, personally considered, was a terror to the good rather than to the evil. And the simple fact of the apostles having so written, while under such a monarch, supplies of itself a very striking proof, that the distinction between an ordinance of God as such, and the character of the human instrumentality by which that ordinance is from time to time administered, is not a cunningly devised fiction, but an essential truth.

“The sovereignty,” says Bishop Horsley, “particularly intended in the immediate application of the precept to those to whom the epistle was addressed, was the sovereign authority of the Roman emperor. Nero was at the time the possessor of that sovereignty; and the apostle, in what he immediately subjoins to enforce his precept, seems to obviate an objection, which he was well aware the example of Nero’s tyranny might suggest. His reasoning is to this effect—‘The sovereignty,’ you will say, ‘is often placed in unfit hands, and abused to the worst pur-

poses. It is placed in the hands of sensual, rapacious men, of capricious women, and of ill-conditioned boys. It is in such sort abused, as to be made the instrument of lust and ambition, of avarice and injustice. You, yourselves, my brethren, experience the abuse of it in your own persons. It may seem to you, that power derived from the Author of all good, could never be so misplaced, nor be permitted to be so misused; and you may perhaps be ready to conclude, that the father of lies once at least spake truth, when he claimed the disposal of earthly sceptres as his own prerogative. Such reasonings, saith the apostle, are erroneous. No king, however he might use, or abuse, authority, ever reigned but by the appointment of God's providence. There is no such thing as power, but from God. To Him, whatever powers, good or bad, are at any time subsisting in the world, are subordinate. He has good ends of his own, not always to be foreseen by us, to be effected by the abuse of power, as by other partial evils; and to his own secret purpose, he directs the worst actions of tyrants, no less than the best of



godly princes. Man's abuse therefore of his delegated authority, is to be borne with resignation like any other of God's judgments. The opposition of the individual to the sovereign power, is an opposition to God's providential arrangements; and it is the more inexcusable, because the well-being of mankind is the general end for which government is ordained, and this end of government, under all its abuses, is generally answered by it. For the good of government is perpetual and universal; the mischiefs resulting from the abuse of power, temporary and partial. Insomuch, that in governments which are the worst administered, the sovereign power is, for the most part, a terror, not to good works, but to the evil; and, upon the whole, far more beneficial than detrimental to the subject. But this general good of government cannot be secured upon any other terms, than the submission of the individual to what may be called its extraordinary evils.' " \*

To bring this argument to bear, let me adopt language suitable to the circumstances of our own country. The providential rulers

\* Horsley—Sermon on Rom. xiii. 1.

of our state, that is to say, the King, Lords, and Commons, in parliament assembled, have enacted a great variety of laws. As subjects, we are bound to yield obedience, under the sanction of temporal penalties. But by what *scriptural* authority is it, that we are called upon to obey an act of parliament? There are no acts of parliament in the Bible. They all rest upon human authority. Obedience, we see, is indispensable, on pain of present suffering in body or estate: but is there any *scriptural* ground for such obedience? Is there any *religion* in submission? Am I at liberty to say, ‘As a Christian I have nothing to do with such carnal elements. Christianity is between me and my God. The commandments of men, though binding upon my person and property as a citizen, cannot have any weight upon my conscience?’ No, truly; for hear what the Apostle says, *Ye must be subject, not only for wrath, not only for personal safety from temporal penalties, not only for social or political expediency, but also for conscience sake.* A man’s conscience is open only unto God; yet we see here, that every Christian is bound to obey

the commandments of men in authority, for conscience sake. Why? Because God in his providence has appointed the ruler, (whatever the form of government may be,) and God in his word has said, Obey the ruler.

Again let me strengthen my position, not by the great name, but by the weighty arguments of Bishop Horsley. "It is true, that in the world, taken as it now is, and hath been for many ages, cases happen, in which the sovereign power is conferred by the act of the people, and in which that act alone can give the sovereign a just title. Not only in elective monarchies, upon the natural demise of the reigning prince, is the successor raised to the throne by the suffrage of the people; but in governments of whatever denomination, if the form of government undergo a change, or the established rule of succession be set aside by any violent or necessary revolution, the act of the nation itself is necessary to erect a new sovereignty, or to transfer the old right to the new possessor. . . . But it is no just inference, that the obligation upon the private citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised, arises

wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. In all these cases, *the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs* to advance the new sovereign to his station. The obligation to obedience proceeds secondarily only from the act of man, but primarily from the will of God, who hath appointed civil life for man's condition, and requires the citizen's submission to the sovereign whom his providence shall, by whatever means, set over him."

I am well aware how readily and plausibly, and yet, for the most part, how very unreasonably, an argumentum ad hominem is got up, and the testimony of such a man as Horsley evaded, by an unworthy sneer at his interested motives, or the prejudices of his high-church and monarchical education. But you will remember that (so far as great names are concerned) similar sentiments on this subject have been left on record by Milton, Calvin,\* and others; men of no ordinary minds, and certainly of very different associations and prejudices from Horsley.

\* "Quasi vero Deus non ita regat populum, ut



The question indeed is not to be decided by authority, but by the weight of sound reasoning. The reasoning, however, which has the

cui Deus vult, regnum tradat populus."—*Milton—Def. pro pop. Angl.* Apud Horsley.

"Ratio cur debeamus subjecti esse magistratibus, quod Dei ordinatione sunt constituti. Quod, si ita placet Domino mundum gubernare; Dei ordinem invertere nititur, adeoque *Deo ipsi resistit*, quisquis potestatem aspernatur: quando, ejus, qui juris politici auctor est, providentiam contemnere, bellum cum eo suscipere est."—*Calvin in Rom. xiii. 1.* Ibid.

Si in Dei verbum respicimus longius nos educet, ut non eorum modo principum imperio subditus, qui probe, et qua debent fide, munere suo erga nos defunguntur, sed omnium, *qui quoquo modo rerum potiuntur*, etiamsi nihil minus præstent, quam quod ex officio erat principum.

In eo probando insistamus magis, quod non ita facile in hominum mentes cadit, *in homine deterimo*, honoreque omni indignissimo, penes quem modo sit publica potestas, *præclaram illam et divinam potestatem residere*; quam DOMINUS justitiæ ac judicii sui ministris, verbo suo, detulit: proinde a subditis eadem in reverentia et dignitate habendum, quantum ad publicam obedientiam attinet, qua optimum regem, si daretur, habituri essent.—*Calvin. Inst. iv. 20, 25.*

combined suffrages of such men, is not to be set aside by any flippant sneer at divine right ; or any unproved assertions, however palatable to the natural insubordination of the human mind.

Here then is the scriptural key. The rulers have commanded, and forbidden, a vast variety of particulars, and this key locks all such enactments as imperative upon the consciences of christian men. Because, the one statement, *the powers that be are ordained of God*, and the one precept, *be subject for conscience sake*, as they imply an authority in the power to make one law, and impose a duty upon the Christian to obey that law ; so they sanction the authority of a thousand laws.

You will perceive then clearly, my friend, what it is of some consequence to bear in mind, that, in reference to our duty as christian subjects, the Bible is not a sufficient guide in *details*. It was never designed to be so. It is all-sufficient in *principle*. It invests the living ruler with authority, as the minister of God on the earth, to command details ; and it binds us to obey the details

so commanded, although they be not mentioned in the Bible. You will also perceive how there is true religion in such obedience, and how there would be irreligion, as well as rebellion, in disobedience. For all true christian subjects, knowing whose authority their rulers have, do faithfully serve, honour, and humbly obey them, in Christ, and for Christ, the divine HEAD of all constituted authority. Every law of our land, therefore, comes to the mind, and commands the conscientious submission of a real christian Englishman, upon the ultimate authority of a precept of Scripture.\*

If any Englishman were to determine otherwise, and say, 'Away with all human authority and human traditions; my allegiance is to the Lord Jesus alone, and my only statute-book is the word of my God,'—he might perhaps, in these days, wear the aspect of a champion for christian liberty, but he would, in truth, be a transgressor against

\* The intelligent reader is requested to suspend his judgment upon this branch of the argument, until he shall have the whole statement before him. See pp. 41—49.

plain apostolical injunctions. And if he attempted to defend his conduct by pleading what seems to him the injustice or the absurdity of the enactment, or the gross abuses into which the administrators of it have fallen; and thereupon declared his independence of such Babylonish ordinances, refusing to do, or pay, any thing at the command of *man*; he would not only incur the penalty inflicted by the ruler, but he would be acting in defiance of his own idol, the written word of God. Thus, *passive resistance* against the laws of the state, is active rebellion against the precepts of the Bible: and though timid rulers may, for a time, bear the sword in vain, God will eventually avenge himself.

We are now prepared to enter upon the parallel statement of the true scriptural ground of authority, in the rulers of the christian church. And parallel it is, in *principle*, although Christ's kingdom be not of this world, and the details to which the principle applies be consequently of a very different nature.

This shall be the subject of my next letter.

I am faithfully yours.



## LETTER III.

THE SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY OF THE  
ECCLESIASTICAL RULER.

MY DEAR —,

ARE we, or are we not, under a scriptural obligation to submit to the ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake?

I have briefly answered this question, as it refers to the institutions of civil government; and I now propose to give you my views concerning it, as it refers to ecclesiastical ordinances, for the regulation and well-being of the christian church.

“ While Jesus Christ not only claimed no temporal sovereignty, but firmly refused to accept it when pressed upon him, he nevertheless asserted his regal dignity: he told Pilate that he was a King, though he assured him his kingdom was not of this world. And

he delegated authority in this his spiritual empire, not to kings or other civil magistrates, but to apostles, as destitute as himself of all secular power, and as far from claiming any. ‘As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’—‘I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.’—‘I have given unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained; whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven: and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ I scarcely need remark to you, that these expressions imply, not merely a delegation of authority, but also that it was delegated, not to the apostles alone, as individuals, (because they, as individuals, were mortal, and Christ therefore could not always be with them,) but also to their successors, the bishops and pastors of the church, whom they doubtless under the direction of the Holy Spirit, ordained to fill those offices, and who have continued in unbroken succes-



sion down to the present day. Nor can it be necessary to reply at length to the empty cavil, that the force of this uninterrupted succession is destroyed by the series having passed through the Romish church, whose manifold abuses, and whose usurpation of secular power, obliged Protestants to separate from her communion; or, rather, to make such a reform as induced the Romish church to withdraw from theirs. It is evident that the misconduct of their predecessors cannot divest them of their right to ordain successors in that authority which was really theirs. If a former king of Great Britain have advanced a groundless claim to the crown of France, this cannot invalidate the right of his descendants, who have renounced that claim, to inherit their own proper dominions.”\*

This is strong. And it is rendered stronger by reference to the well-known directions given by St. Paul to his ordained successors Timothy and Titus, and the clear distinction afterwards recognized by our Lord himself, be-

\* *Letters on the Church.* By an Episcopalian, London 1826. pp. 59, 60.

tween the angels or messengers of the churches in Asia, and the churches themselves.\*

\* In the face of scriptural testimony so abundant and unequivocal, it was with sincere regret that I read such passages as the following in the journal of that devoted servant of God, Mr. Groves.—“It is that yoke of mere human ordination, the necessity of a title from man to preach, and administer, as it is called, the sacraments, of which not so much as a hint is contained in the New Testament ; it is that awful distinction between laity and clergy, which are the things that tie up all hands, and put bodies of men into situations of trial, who, but for this delusion, would be without any comparative difficulties.” The writer of the introduction to that journal says, in a similar tone—“In these very epistles (to the seven churches of Asia) there is a commendation for disregarding, for the truth’s sake, the highest titles of ecclesiastical office. *Thou canst not bear them which are evil : thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*” It is here taken for granted, that the persons in question *had received* the highest titles of ecclesiastical office : and it is boldly asserted that the passage contains a commendation for disregarding these titles for the truth’s sake. But how can either of these statements be proved ? The persons referred to *said* they were apostles : on trial by the angel of the church of Ephesus, they were found liars ; they had *said what was not*

I appeal moreover to the plain language addressed by the apostle to the christian Hebrews, as not only implying the standing and recognized distinction between ministers and people, but also containing that general exhortation to obedience, which renders submission to the ecclesiastical ordinances of man, a duty founded upon the word of God. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.\** And the spirit in which this obedience is to be rendered, is beautifully described in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. *We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour true.* They were *not* apostles. They could not stand the trial of this faithful minister: They had neither the miraculous signs which belonged to apostles sent by the Lord himself, nor the “titles of ecclesiastical office,” which belonged to apostles sent by apostles: and therefore their pretensions were vain, and they were evil men, though they might have learned (as many evil men and false pretenders have learned) to be orthodox preachers; and therefore the Ephesian pastor is commended for his discriminating zeal in detecting and rejecting them.

\* Heb. xiii. 17.

*among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake.\**

Nothing can be more obvious, than that such instructions were given by the apostle to the christian laity, concerning the first pastors or angels of the churches. Obey your church rulers, and submit yourselves, saith the Holy Ghost by the apostle, for they are *over you in the Lord*. Their official authority, in virtue of which they require your obedience, is not arrogated of man, but ordained of God ; and therefore submission is inculcated as a matter of conscience towards God.

The favourite mode of evading all this, adopted by separatists, is to say, first, that the pastors here spoken of by the apostle were all men of personal piety, and preachers of scriptural truth : and then, secondly, that obedience to them is enjoined in virtue of their *character* altogether, and not at all in virtue of their office. Thus, restraining the precept to such pastors as they are pleased to consider faithful men, and to them, only as

\* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.



long as they continue to give satisfaction to these modest judges ; they get wholly rid of the constraint of the divine injunction, which by this interpretation and this limitation, they render as nugatory as any of their own maxims ; and thereupon find their conscience perfectly at ease, while they make free, in word and deed, with bishops, and churches, and ordinances.

It is highly probable that most, if not all, of the first pastors of the churches, were men of personal godliness, and preachers of sound doctrine ; but it does by no means follow that their character was their qualification as pastors. Nay, the very existence of pastors as distinct from their flocks, proves the contrary : or else, it proves that in each church there was but one godly man, possessing the gift of speech. For if all, or most, of the members of a church were of that character, and if character, without ordination, qualified for the ministry, then all, or most, were ministers, and the distinction disappears. But we have already seen that the distinction is scriptural, and therefore this interpretation of the separatists must disappear. Do not mis-

take me, my friend, as if it were my design, or desire, to depreciate character, or to justify the wicked: far otherwise, but personal character is not my present subject. I am proving the reality and the authority of the pastoral office. I deny not, that this office has been too often entrusted to unfit hands, and abused to the worst of purposes. It has been in such sort abused, as to be made the instrument of lust and ambition, of avarice and injustice and sloth. But still, the office exists, and, in those deplorable cases, weighs down the wretched renegade who holds it, under its increased responsibilities, and aggravated judgments. You will perhaps say, as some seceders have said, that this is to ascribe an *opus operatum* to a mere manual ceremony. But let us not be deterred by hard words. If the *opus* referred to, be an increased responsibility, then truly there is an *opus operatum* in the reception of every christian privilege, and of this among the rest. The privilege of instruction in our Lord's will, incurs the penalty of *many* stripes, if that will be not obeyed. The privilege of christian ordinances transfers a community from



the more tolerable condition of Tyre and Sidon, into the more intolerable responsibility of Chorazin and Bethsaida. And the privilege of the christian ministry exposes the unworthy intruder to a deadlier condemnation. This is not merely gathered by general inference, but seems to be the direct and obvious meaning of St. James, where he says, in his catholic epistle to the twelve tribes, *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.\**

But, to return to the authority of the church: although, as regards MATTERS OF FAITH, we are bound to look upon ourselves as the immediate successors of the apostolical churches, and utterly to reject any addition to the Scriptures;† yet, as regards

\* Luke xii. 47, 48. Matt. xi. 21, 22. James iii. 1.

† The authority of the church in "controversies of faith" (Art. xx.) is simply that of an interpreter. Though, doubtless, the aggregate wisdom, and measured watchfulness of her decisions, together with the subsequent general consent of succeeding generations with the Bible in their hands, serve to give, in unprejudiced minds, increased weight to her interpretations. Her interpretations differ from

rites, and ceremonies, and forms of worship, we are not, I conceive, at liberty to look upon ourselves as immediate successors of those first churches, as though no ordinance of man had intervened.

This distinction between matters of faith to be believed for salvation, and rites and ceremonies instituted for the preservation of decency and order, is neither fanciful nor arbitrary. It is not a quibble of carnal men conveniently invented for the propping up of a Babylonish fabric, as it has been slanderously represented. It is strictly scriptural. The Bible proclaims its own sufficiency as regards matters of faith. Paul informs Timothy that the holy Scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus: and adds that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works.\* But as re-

private interpretations, much in the same way that an act of parliament differs from the speech of an honourable senator.

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

gards institutions and ceremonies of order, the Bible proclaims its own insufficiency. The apostle enjoins upon the brethren to submit themselves to the rulers, which would be worse than useless, if the rulers had no lawful authority to command anything beyond the letter of the Scripture. To the Corinthian church, the apostle says, *Let all things be done decently and in order*; and again he says, *The rest will I set in order when I come*; and to Titus he says, *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest* SET IN ORDER THE THINGS THAT ARE WANTING, *and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.* The Scriptures contain no detailed description of how Paul set things in order at Corinth, or Titus in Crete; and the omission was designed, that other churches in different circumstances, and ages, and climates, might enjoy christian liberty, while with wisdom and discretion they set things in order for themselves. The reason and the mercy of this are obvious, in a religion which was designed to extend to the north and the south, to the east and the west; a religion which was to gather

its converts from the most cultivated and the most barbarous of human tribes, and assemble its congregations in every varying latitude from the burning sands of Guyana and Peru to the icebergs on the coast of Norway.

It follows then, that the Bible was never designed to be a sufficient guide in all the details of management in the church of Christ. It is all-sufficient in principle. It invests the church rulers with true authority to enter into details, and it binds the members of the church to yield submission to the details so prescribed, though they be not written in the Bible. In no case upon earth is it possible, for the ultimate end of legislative authority, to be the immediate director in every detail of the executive. Therefore general orders are indispensable as the groundwork of delegated authority. **TO THIS INFIRMITY OF HUMAN MANAGEMENT, THE LORD HAS CONDESCENDED IN THE HISTORY OF HIS CHURCH.** He has employed the instrumentality of human rulers. The rulers are those who in the providence of God, have the rule, whatever may be the



form of church government. General orders are given in the Bible : delegated authority is entrusted to the rulers of the christian church : and every regulation, every ceremony of the church, decreed by those rulers (and not contradicted by Scripture \*) comes to the mind and commands the obedience of a christian churchman, as if it were a precept of Scripture.

“ To deny her this power, would be to supersede the use of the church altogether, since if those things which are in the Scriptures left at large, such as the mode, for instance, of celebrating the Lord’s supper, the times and places of joint religious worship, &c.—if these I say, unspecified points, which *must* be determined by some one, are not to be determined by the church, in each country respectively ; the very purpose for which Jesus Christ instituted this society is defeated ; since, if she has any authority at all

\* See pp. 41—49. The different branches of the subject are treated separately, for the sake of order and clearness : but to criticise one part, out of connexion with the remainder, would be wilfully to misrepresent the writer.

(which he expressly gave her) and has none in matters determined in Scripture, she must have it in things *undetermined* in Scripture. . . . In matters of discipline, the positive institutions of the church *make* things right and wrong which were left undetermined in Scripture: such as the observance of religious festivals, forms of public worship, administration of the sacraments, and things of that nature. And to disregard the authority of the church in matters of this description (I mean, of course, in such cases where there is nothing ordained that is against Scripture) —to consider things which were originally indifferent, as indifferent *after* the church has enacted regulations respecting them, is an offence against Christ himself, the head of that body: not so *great* an offence, I allow, as direct rebellion against his own immediate commands; but as *truly* an offence. For Christians should remember, that they cannot obey, in many instances, even the express commands of Scripture, unless they comply either with some kind of ecclesiastical discipline, or with some unauthorised devices of their own, instead. Our Saviour expressly



commands the celebration of the holy communion, and St. Paul, the assembling of Christians, for the purpose of prayer and religious exhortation. Now these things must be done in *some* time, place, and form, if the commands are to be obeyed at all; and if each follows his own fancy in these points, there will be divisions among Christians, they will come together, not for the better, but for the worse, like the disorderly Corinthians, of whom every one had a psalm, had an exhortation, had an interpretation, &c. which led to confusion and discord, all which are expressly forbidden in Scripture itself." \*

What would be said to the colonel of a regiment, who, on receiving certain detailed orders from the general of brigade, replied, I will not obey them; I have here the Articles of War, which I received from the commander-in-chief, and they contain no mention of these orders? No. But do they not contain a general order of obedience to your superiors in command? Equally unreasonable and unscriptural is it, in any man

\* *Letters on the Church, &c.*, pp. 63—65.

to say, I will not conform to such or such a ceremony of the church, because there is no mention made of it in the Scripture. He has the Bible in his hand commanding him to obey the rulers of the church : the rulers say, Do this ; and he replies, No, I will not do it, because it is not specified in the Bible ! The soldiers and servants of the Gentile centurion shall rise up in the judgment with such a man, and shall condemn him. For that centurion was exercising a delegated authority, under general orders, and when he gave particular orders to those under him, they obeyed him. He said to one, Go, and he went ; and to another, Come, and he came ; and to his servant, Do this, and he did it. And verily I say unto you, a greater than the centurion is here !

Imagine the case of a nobleman's family, wherein there is a large retinue of servants. Two of these servants are, or fancy themselves, converted characters, while all the rest of the family are worldly minded to an excess. These two are persecuted as spies by their fellow-servants, and despised as canting methodists by their master. If

they pray, they must pray by stealth : if they read, they must hide their book the moment any one approaches ; if they attend a church where the gospel is preached, they must endure reproach, and scorn and scoffing for it : if they go out to enjoy communion with a christian neighbour, they must do it, at the risk of losing their places. Well, this they think is quite delightful. The people of God, say they, have always been sufferers. Ah ! yes, the godly are always poor and afflicted—it is refreshing to the spirit to have the high privilege of suffering for righteousness' sake : but woe to the persecuting tyrants, who oppress God's dear little ones ! After some time, their master becomes a religious character, and *establishes* family worship in his house. He *commands* all his servants to assemble at nine o'clock, morning and evening, for reading the Scriptures and prayer. Then those two servants say, No, no human authority has a right to dictate to us, when we shall pray. Our religion is between ourselves and God ; such orders from man are a tyrannical controul over the conscience. This is a bigoted, popish family :

what ! fix nine o'clock every day for prayer, like an ancient pharisee ! No, truly. Real prayer is spiritual. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. Our vital godliness will be compromised by a Babylonish alliance with this family. We will *not* go to family prayer !!! Is not this a counterpart of the objections of many to the ecclesiastical discipline of the Church of England ? And is it not the secret pride of independence, the instinctive insubordination of the natural heart, which lies at the root of this boasted love of spirituality ? If you leave me alone to please myself, I will do many things. It is a secret gratification to me to be the originating source of my own actions, it flatters my self-importance ; but if any human authority command me to do it, so that in doing it, I must practice submission, and acknowledge my own comparative littleness, then I won't do it. When man orders it, it ceases to be religion, for there is no respect of persons with God !

If there be ridicule in this illustration, be assured, my friend, it is not used in a spirit of mockery ; but as a lawful, because scriptural, weapon, when used in seriousness of reproof.



It may be profitable to advert briefly to the difference, in point of sanction, between the act of parliament and the ceremony of the church. They are both decreed by *the powers that be*: they are both therefore binding upon the consciences of christian men. But in the case of the one, there is a judge, and a gaol, and a scaffold; in the case of the other, there is (and ought to be) nothing of this kind. The church, with all her discipline, even if maintained unto excommunication,\* may be despised with *present* impunity—and therefore so she is, most largely. The magistrate may not be so despised, and therefore he is obeyed. If the fear of God were upon men, they would respect the authority of the rulers of the church, as much as of those of the state: for both are ordained of God, and obedience to both is commanded in

\* “ This term sounds harshly, partly from its association with the abuses of the Romish Church, and partly from the *secular* penalties, which in Protestant states have been superadded: but these are no *part* of excommunication, which means simple rejection from the society, which it would be most unreasonable for one to complain of, who wilfully and pertinaciously infringed the regulations of that society.”—*Letters on the Church*.

the word of God. But the weapons of the church's warfare are not carnal. Toleration, as inculcated by our Lord Jesus Christ, is now well understood and practised by the church of England. Popery indeed discarded it, both in theory and practice: and in every age, Fanaticism, verifying the adage that extremes meet, has discarded it in theory; her practice being restrained apparently only by her impotence, or by some lingering, though reluctant, deference to public opinion, which she is not able wholly to shake off, except occasionally during violent paroxysms of her excitement, when she forgets her policy in the sincerity of her madness. But the Lord is long-suffering, and "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." All that we can do, as christian churchmen, is to teach, and persuade, and warn them: affectionately and earnestly reminding them, that now is the appointed time, now the day of salvation—that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night—that when they shall say "peace



and safety," then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, one precept of which is, *obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.*

Now methinks I see the spirit of civil and religious liberty kindling up in my friend, and almost hear you exclaim, What! is then absolute submission in church and state, the scriptural duty of every christian man? And is there no limit? Why, this is the old exploded bigotry of the dark ages—divine right and passive obedience! According to this, the reformation was unjustifiable, the revolution was rebellion against God! Nay, friend, not so hasty. Let me entreat your patient and candid attention to my next letter.

I am faithfully yours.

## LETTER IV.

## THE SCRIPTURAL LIMIT OF AUTHORITY.

MY DEAR —,

WHAT is the *scriptural limit* set to the authority of the ruler, whether civil or ecclesiastical, in imposing ordinances upon christian men?

There is a limit, and that limit is the Bible itself. The christian authority of the ruler is derived from parts of the Bible; when therefore the ruler enacts any law, or decrees any ceremony which is contrary to other parts of the Bible, *he arraigns his own charter*. He can no longer claim the authority of Scripture as the basis of his own authority, and of course it ceases to be a scriptural duty to obey him. But so long as the laws and ceremonies introduced by the ruler

are confined to matters which the Bible has left undetermined, or wholly unnoticed, they are to be obeyed, for conscience sake, by all christian men.

Suppose a father to entrust his sons to the care of a tutor, giving at the same time to both them and the tutor, a written list of directions for the regulation of their lives: suppose the list to consist of one hundred items, one of which was, *Obey your tutor*; and suppose also the letter to contain an address from the father to the tutor, saying, As God entrusted these children to my care, even so do I entrust them to your care. The children, thus supplied with a dead letter of infallible directions, and a living fallible guide invested with authority to give them additional directions, would be in a condition resembling that of the christian laity. When the tutor issued a command, those children, if wise and dutiful, would first examine whether their tutor's command *contradicted* any of the remaining ninety and nine instructions of their father. If it did not, they would say, We are bound for conscience sake to our father, to obey th'

letter fully warrants our tutor to require such obedience. But if their tutor's command did contradict any of the instructions in their father's letter, then they would say, Our tutor has forgotten his proper place; he has no authority over us except what he derives from this letter: now he is going against the letter, and therefore, for conscience sake to our father, we must refuse to obey him.

“ A great difference is here to be made between those rules that both church and state ought to set to themselves in their enacting of such matters, and the measures of the obedience of subjects. The only question in the point of obedience must be—LAWFUL or UNLAWFUL. For *expedient* or *inexpedient* ought never to be brought into question as to the point of obedience; since no inexpediency whatsoever can balance the breaking of order, and the dissolving the constitution and society. . . . . But those in whose hands the making of those rules is put, ought to carry their thoughts much farther: they ought to consider well the genius of the christian religion. . . . . Yet in this matter no certain or mathematical rules can be given. Every



person concerned in the management of this authority, must act as he will answer it to God and to the church ; for he must be at liberty in applying general rules to particular times and cases." " Now since there is not any one thing that Christ has enjoined more solemnly and more frequently than love and charity, union and agreement, amongst his disciples ; since we are also required to assemble ourselves together, to constitute ourselves in a body, both for worshipping God jointly, and for maintaining order and love among the society of Christians ; we ought to acquiesce in such rules as have been agreed upon by common consent, and which are recommended to us by long practice, and that are established by those who have the lawful authority over us. Nor can we assign any other bounds to our submission in this case, than those that the gospel has limited. *We must obey God rather than man ;* and we must in the first place *render to God the things that are God's*, and then *give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*. So that if either church or state have power to make rules and laws in such matters, they must have



this extent given them, that till they break in upon the laws of God and the gospel, we must be bound to obey them. A mean cannot be put here: either they have no power at all, or they have a power that must go to every thing that is not forbidden by any law of God. This is the only measure that can be given in this matter.”\*

But this, after all, is to make us the judges? In this one point undoubtedly it is. And to this end is the Bible put into our hands, not as an all-sufficient guide, to supersede a living voice, a delegated authority, and a discretionary power; but as a rectifier, an infallible standard, in *opposition* to which, christian governors ought not to command, nor christian men to obey. Upon this one point, whether a law or ceremony is, or is not, contradictory to the Bible, let every man judge dispassionately, and decide at his peril, in the sight of God. But let no man imagine that he has any scriptural right to disobey a law of the state, or disregard a ceremony of the church, (however he may personally dislike it, or however inex-

\* *Burnet on the Articles.* Art. XX.

pedient, or absurd, or vexatious, he may consider it,) merely because there is nothing concerning it in the Bible. On the contrary, if there be nothing concerning it in the Bible, then, it is clear, it cannot be contradictory to the Bible: and, in that case, the enactment of the ruler (as I have already proved) gives it the authority of the Bible itself.

Surely, then, I may anticipate your agreement with me in the conclusion, that the common cry against many of the ceremonies of the church, ‘Where do you find them in the Bible?’ is altogether unworthy of a place in the disputations of christian men of enlarged and enlightened minds. The question is not, Are these ceremonies prescribed in the Bible? but, Are they contradictory to the Bible? It is not, Have the rulers authority to enact? but, Have they transgressed the scriptural limits of their authority?\*

\* The distinction between rites and ceremonies to be observed for decency and order, and doctrines to be believed for necessity of salvation, must never be lost sight of. The authority of the church in reference to these two classes of things, is wholly different. The church has scriptural authority to decree rites and ceremonies, *in addition* to what is

The rulers of the Romish system did so transgress. They enacted, not only things indifferent, things injudicious and inexpedient, (had they stopped there, they ought still to have been obeyed,) but they proceeded to enact things *unlawful*, things in direct, palpable, and even verbal, contradiction to holy Scripture. They enacted, for example, the perpetual repetition of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, while the Scripture declares that sacrifice to have been offered once, and only once, once for all, *εφ'απαξ*. They enacted the bowing down before images, (in this point of view it matters nothing, whether there be worship, or

contained in Scripture, provided there be nothing in them "*contrary* to God's word written." But the church has no authority to enforce any doctrine in addition to what is contained in holy Scripture. Doctrines in addition to the Bible, and ceremonies in opposition to the Bible, must be rejected for conscience sake. But ceremonies in addition to, and not in opposition to the Bible, if decreed by the ruler, must be received, adopted, and practised, for the same conscience sake. This distinction is fully recognized, and very happily expressed in Article XX. of the Church of England.

what species or degree of worship, in their bowing down,) while the Scripture says, "Ye shall not *bow down* unto them." They enacted encroachments on the secular power, even to the virtual assumption, and, in many flagrant instances, the actual exercise of complete temporal dominion; while the Scripture says, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world. Many other such things did they enact, in direct hostility to the word of God. They unchristianized themselves. The christian course, under such circumstances, was to stand fast at the line of separation between *indifferent* and *unlawful* enactments; to persevere in obedience to the former, for conscience sake, and resolutely to disobey the latter, for the same conscience sake. To submit to the unlawful enactment was apostacy. To reject alike the indifferent and the unlawful, was schismatic petulance. To discriminate between them, retaining allegiance to the one, as the lawful exercise of delegated authority, and resisting the other, as the unlawful excess of the same—this was christian wisdom. And this is a brief, but correct statement of the principle on which



both the Reformation, and the Revolution, were effected.

An interesting instance of the same principle in operation, is supplied by the history of the prophet Daniel, and his three young friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There can be no doubt that these men conformed, for conscience sake, to the habits and customs of the Persian court, and to the general laws of the land, however injudicious many of those enactments may have been in themselves, or however vexatious, or partial, in their operation: but when the king proceeded to command idolatry, and to prohibit prayer, then these faithful men disobeyed the king; disregarding, for conscience sake towards God, the fiery furnace, and the den of lions.

I shall now proceed to apply these principles, and therein to try the grounds of your secession from the church of England.

I am faithfully yours.



## LETTER V.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND WITHIN THE  
SCRIPTURAL LIMIT.

MY DEAR —,

HAVE the rulers of the Church of England transgressed the *scriptural limits* of their delegated authority?

This opens a wide field. To enter into it adequately, would be to write again, what has been well written already, in defence of infant baptism, open communion, christian burial, and the other ordinances and formularies of the church. Have you met with a little work, published by Seeley, last year, entitled, “Essays on the Church, with some reference to Mr. James’s work on ‘Dissent and the Church of England?’” If not, permit me to request, that you will give it an attentive, and fair perusal. And, in the

mean time, I transcribe a passage for you as a specimen, from pp. 135—138.

“ We class them all together ; for the same fault, if fault it be, pervades the whole of these offices. And that fault is, *the elevation of their tone and standard*. They are framed for saints, and not for the worldly-minded or the reprobate. They are *offices of the church*, and are meant for members of the church only, and not for the careless or profane.

“ Considered in this point of view, the very language which is so vehemently exclaimed against, constitutes one of their chief beauties. They speak *of Christians* and *for Christians*, and they speak in the language of faith and assurance. In the office of baptism, for instance, which is one of the principal stumbling-blocks with dissenters, the parents are first besought to call upon God, ‘ that of his bounteous mercy he will grant unto this child that thing *which by nature he cannot have*, that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost,’ &c. They are next exhorted, ‘ Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will favourably receive this infant ; and then they are led to

pray, in this earnest faith, ‘ Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again,’ &c.

“ And *then* it is, that, *after all this*, the church, not admitting the idea that the prayer of faith can be offered up in vain, or that the promise of the Lord, ‘ I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring,’ can be invoked without effect,—assumes the spiritual birth of the child, and addresses the parents with the encouraging words, ‘ Seeing now, dearly beloved, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ’s church.’

“ And in all this, the fault and the blame, if fault there be, lies not with the church which dispenses, but with the unworthy recipients of the sacrament. If prayer is made with the mouth only, if faith be professed without being exercised, then, indeed, no benefit can be expected from the ordinance. But how can the church provide for this state of things? How can she prepare a fit and proper form of prayer for those who come merely to initiate prayer? How can she provide an appropriate ordinance

for those who are destitute of that faith without which all ordinances are alike vain and unprofitable?

“ The same view may be taken of the office for the sick, and of that for the burial of the dead, and of that for ordination. The absolute necessity of faith and repentance is ever put in the most clear and prominent light. To the sick person declaring his faith and penitence, pardon is pronounced in the strongest terms, but not in stronger terms than those of Scripture. In the ordination service, *after* the candidate has declared himself to be ‘ moved by the Holy Ghost ’ to take upon himself the office of a minister, then does the bishop lay his hands upon him with prayer; and not believing the office to be a mere empty form, he declares the impartation, in that ordinance, of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, in a more especial and plenary manner. As to the usual objection to the burial service, it must not be forgotten, that the original phrase, ‘ Hope of resurrection,’ was altered into the more general one, of ‘ Hope of *the* resurrection,’ in order to obviate that very criticism in which dissenters still persist. In fact, when do



dissenters themselves, over the graves of their own members, omit to express at least a general hope, whatever the character of the deceased may have been? And if they cherish a hope at all, to what can that hope have reference, but to the resurrection?

“And while the forms of the church,—which though constructed for saints, are yet often invoked by the careless and unbelieving, may be, and doubtless often are, abused to the self-deceiving of those who thus invoke them; this is an evil not so much attaching to them as to human nature. Men will always cling for refuge to forms, whether in the church or out of it. And in one respect there is greater harm and danger in the practice of dissenters, than in that of the church. Nothing contained in a public and general form of prayer can be taken to be especially applied to an individual case. Whereas the extempore prayers of dissenters have a natural and necessary reference to particular persons and events. And how often among dissenters, has an unsatisfactory and even an awful death-bed been misrepresented and softened down by the false tenderness or interested bias of the



officiating minister at a funeral, to the deep and lasting injury of their friends and survivors. This is a temptation which is perpetually recurring, and which is especially attendant on the use of extempore ministrations."

Compliance with these ordinances and formularies is enacted by the ruler. If these, or any of them, can be proved to be *contradictory* to the word of God; then, such compliance is proved to be unlawful, and ought not to be yielded by any christian man; but if such proof cannot be adduced, then the enactments are lawful, and may not be resisted without contempt of scripture.

The question, therefore, is one of careful interpretation of the word of God, and wise comparison of the result with the ordinances of the church. Declamation here, must go for nothing. Unproved assertions, however sincerely made by the individual disputant, and accompanied with the most vehement and indiscriminate condemnation of all who differ, must be looked upon as less than nothing in the argument. It is easy to denounce the "awful profaneness" of calling every member of the church of England

a Christian. It is easy to exclaim with real, or affected indignation, against the "Babylonish abomination" of teaching every baptized person to say, that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is easy, by such a strain, to disturb light and ignorant minds, and supply a glad excuse to the disaffected: but it is not so easy to prove, that the practices so denounced, are opposed to the word of God.

Read St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Mark his mode of address.\* He

\* "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. . . . I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you, by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge: even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

salutes them as sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. He thanks God on their

“Whereas there is among you, envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? . . . . I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one, that shall be able to judge between his brethren? but brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, *ye do wrong, and defraud*, and that your brethren. . . . Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For, in eating, every one taketh before other, his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is *drunken*. What! have ye not houses, to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. . . . How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? . . . . Some will say, How are the dead

behalf, for the grace of God which was given them by Jesus Christ, and assures them, that God is faithful by whom they were called into the fellowship of his Son. It would be difficult to devise expressions, more strikingly descriptive of real Christians, than these. And yet, afterwards, without any systematic statement of a distinction between certain characters whom he did mean, and certain others whom he did not mean to include; he proceeds to reprove them as carnal, declaring that there was envying among them, and strife, and divisions. He condemns them as evil doers, and dishonest, defrauding their brethren. He exposes their abuses as profaners of the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper. And finally, he argues, with a mixture of indignation and sharp rebuke against some of them who were infidels, as touching the grand truth of the resurrection of the body. I shall not prolong this letter, by examining *the principle*,\* upon

raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool," &c. &c. 1 Cor. i. 1—9.; iii. 3.; vi. 5—8.; xi. 17—22; xv. 12. 35, &c.

\* Those who have adopted a narrower principle,



which a church, so designated as saints, is afterwards so reproved. It is to the *fact* itself, that I beg to call your attention. The apostle addresses in general terms, and without any caveat or distinction, as children of God the whole Corinthian church, inclusive, as it afterwards appears, of immoral and irreligious characters. Is it, therefore, I ask, so “obviously and outrageously unscriptural” to address baptized persons generally, as children of God, and then to proceed to correct abuses among them, whether of faith or practice?

In the tenth chapter of this epistle, we are instructed in the christian use of the history of Israel. The circumcised nation, in their aggregate privileges, and their individual abuses, are expressly set forth as our ensample and warning. They are all spoken of as the people of God, in conformity with the language so frequently addressed to them by Moses. But all were not Israel have found themselves compelled to act inconsistently. A few, who have fairly *followed up* the principle of separation upon private judgment, have found *themselves*, THE CHURCH: and have recoiled from the absurdity.



who were of Israel. With many of them God was not well pleased. They were murmurers, idolaters, lusters after evil things. They were rebuked by their teachers, but they would not hearken. And in consequence of their manifold and incorrigible iniquities, these children of God were overthrown in the wilderness. The case is declared by the apostle, to be parallel to that of the christian church. "These things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Upon this view of the case, the rulers of the church of England have proceeded. All her baptized members are saluted as children of God, as dearly beloved brethren; then, diversities of character are recognized; instruction is given; consolation, and reproof, and warning, and correction, are administered; and prayer is offered up according to the various exigencies of the case.

But you object, that instead of palliating the evil, and faithlessly continuing in com-

munion with the doers of it, as, you allege, the church of England does; the apostle commands the Corinthians to "put away from among them that wicked person." It is most true, that in *one* instance of a flagrant, undeniable and scandalizing sin, the apostle does command separation. But in reference to those generally, who were envious, and who fomented strife and divisions, those who were guilty of frauds in business, and irregularities in worship, and those who questioned or even denied the resurrection of the body, the apostle does not command separation. He knew that a perfectly pure and holy brotherhood, without mixture of evil, as it never had existed, (no, not in Israel,) so it never would exist upon earth, until the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew, and felt in himself, that sincerity the most guileless, and faithfulness the most determined, and devotedness the most ardent, were compatible with lingering infirmity, and melancholy lapses. And although he made no *excuses* for sin, either in himself or others; yet he fully entered into that exhortation

of his Lord, concerning *the brethren*, “Judge not, that ye be not judged ;” while he strenuously inculcated upon each, to judge *himself*.

This is precisely what the church of England does. In extreme cases, she commands separation. Her description (as you well know) of such as are to be so treated, is, “If any be an open and notorious evil liver, or have done any wrong to his neighbour by word or deed, *so that the congregation be thereby offended.*” This latter clause is necessary, as a modification of the preceding words, which would otherwise be more rigid, than St. Paul’s treatment of the Corinthians. “The curate, having knowledge thereof, shall call him and advertize him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord’s table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented, and amend his former naughty life,” &c.

In the multitude of common cases, though there be much to grieve over, and much to reprove, our church is not so ignorant of Christ’s charity, and Paul’s practice ; or so forgetful of her own infirmity, and liability to mistake, as to command separation. But

I ask you, as an honest man, whether, with her "communion exhortation" before you, it would not be wilful and unfounded slander, to charge her with making excuses for sin.

It is easy, as I have already said, to assert, and to rail. But the only attempts I ever met with *to prove* the formularies of the church an abomination, do appear to me to be equally applicable in principle to the language of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, and to the language of Paul in his epistles. In such company the church of England is content to stand or fall. The two-fold example of the Israelites and the Corinthians, has this advantage, that it sets aside, as not affecting the principle, the question of *comparative numbers* of believers and unbelievers in a church. That the majority of baptized Corinthians were, when the apostle wrote to them, true believers, or at least, the very high degree of probability that they were so, is willingly conceded. Amongst the Israelites, on the contrary, it is matter of distinct revelation, that the majority was frightfully the other way.



You will say the proportions in the church of England are Israelitish, not Corinthian. It is with unfeigned sorrow I feel and admit that such seems to be the case; yet, I am persuaded, by no means to the extent which you fearlessly proclaim. You look for religion upon the bustling surface of society, and not finding it genuine in public measures and public men, you hastily conclude that it is not to be found at all. May not this decision be too hasty? Many of the Lord's people shrink from publicity in any shape. I do not excuse timidity or indolence (even when mistaken for humility) in those who are called to shine as lights in the world. I merely state the fact, reminding you further, that many, especially among the poor of the flocks, who do shine brightly, in their respective little circles, altogether escape your notice. The prophet Elias, in his earnest jealousy for the Lord God of Hosts, was guilty of similar haste in deciding against all Israel. He was rebuked by the gracious Lord, who had reserved to himself a remnant of seven thousand believers. It is deserving of your most serious consideration, whether



in your sweeping denunciations against all churches and pastors who do not follow with you, you may not be condemning many times seven thousand of those who “do not commend themselves, but whom the Lord commendeth.” But your charge, even if well founded to its fullest extent, would not essentially affect the argument now before us: for still, the condition of our national church would not be reduced below the level of Israel at the period of her history to which the apostle alludes, when only two men of the whole host so believed in God, as to escape the overthrow in the wilderness: and when, nevertheless, the whole nation was addressed by Moses as children of God, and described by Paul as having all eaten the same spiritual meat, and all drunken the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ. Is it not true then, my friend, that the outcry which some of you have raised against the church of England for her Babylonish mixture of light and darkness, Christ and Belial, in calling a whole community, children of God; applies with undiminished force to

Moses and Paul? And ought not this to render you at least more modest and moderate in future? All the other charges which I have seen advanced by any of you against *the principles* of the church of England, are resolvable into this, and must stand or fall with it. I entreat you to reconsider your ground, and bearing in mind the scriptural authority delegated to the rulers of the church, to ask yourself dispassionately, Have the rulers of our national church transgressed the limits of that authority? Have they enforced any doctrine which is *not contained* in the word of God? Have they decreed any ceremony which is *contrary to* the word of God?

I am faithfully yours.

*Postscript.*—In compliance with your desire to see how I address my flock upon the subject of the Lord's Supper, I enclose you a sermon. For the greater part of it, I am responsible. But if you are acquainted with Bishop Hopkins's treatise, you will perceive that there is little new in my argumentation with the objectors.

*"For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, till he come."* 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.

THE Lord's supper supplies one of the simplest proofs of the truth of Christianity. It is the practice of thousands, and tens of thousands of human beings to receive the Lord's supper. It was the practice of their fathers, and their grandfathers, and their great grandfathers. When, or with whom, could this practice have commenced? The New Testament says, it commenced with those who saw and heard Jesus Christ himself, and were convinced that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. If this be true, the practice, as we find it, is sufficiently accounted for: but if this be not true, then

how is the practice to be accounted for? It is the commemoration of a fact which is alleged to have taken place; but if the fact never took place, how could the commemoration of it ever have commenced? It is now a continued practice from generation to generation, in remembrance of a fact: but, the question recurs, how could any generation of mankind have *commenced* the practice, except that generation who lived at the time of the fact? To believe that any other generation could have been *the first* to adopt the practice, is to believe a most unnatural absurdity: more unnatural than any thing contained in the scriptural history of the fact. Either the scriptural account is true, and Christianity true, with all its constraining motives, rich consolations, and elevating hopes; or else, some generation of mankind were, with one consent, so stupid, and so perverse, and so false, as to begin a practice, which, at the same time, they all with one consent, declared had been a continued practice before they began it. O! how credulous infidelity is, when the thing to be believed tends to get rid of the troublesome



intrusion of the presence and authority of God!

My brethren, compare with the words of the Bible, the existing practice as regards the Lord's supper, and the existing fact of the dispersed and still separate condition of the Jewish nation: and you have evidence of the divine origin of our holy religion, such as became a God of wisdom and truth, to supply to reasonable creatures. We are indeed creatures of feeling as well as of reason; and God has very graciously added to reasonable evidence, delightful experience in the hearts of his people; even an inward, holy, satisfying joy, with which a stranger intermeddleth not; "the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." But though corroborating feelings (still restrained by reference to the contents of the Bible) minister precious consolation, they form no ground of solid conviction, as to the divine origin of the Bible. To mistake feeling, however sincere and ardent, for evidence, is to put the blossom where the root should be, and thereby to be deprived of stability and endurance.



My present object is to call your attention to the Lord's supper, and first—

I. To the christian's *obligation* to observe this ordinance.

Nothing but divine authority can impose *religious* obligation. But here, a distinction must be made, between what is essentially religious and what is only ceremonial as to the mode of conducting or administering religion. Human authority may impose obligation as to the ceremonials to be observed for decency and order; the mode, for example, of receiving the bread and wine, whether kneeling, or standing, or sitting; or the mode of giving the bread and wine, whether with a set form of words, or without any form. There is a delegated authority and a discretionary power, vested by holy scripture in the rulers of the church, to decree rites and ceremonies. But they have no authority to originate a doctrine in addition to God's word written, or to impose a ceremony in opposition to that word. For this reason, we reject the Romish purgatory, pardons, worshipping, and adoration, as well

of images as of relics, as also invocation of saints, as fond things vainly invented, &c. (Art. xxii.) And the sacrifice of the mass, as a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit. (Art. xxxi.)

But, for the celebration and observance of the Lord's supper, our obligation rests upon the direct and plain commandment of the Lord himself, and of his divinely inspired apostle. "As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 26—28; compare the parallel statements of the other Evangelists, Mark xiv. 22—24, and Luke xxii. 19, 20.) This is sufficient to show the obligation, under which the disciples were laid, to do this in remembrance of their Lord. And that this obligation was not confined to them, is proved by the language of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

He was called to the apostleship, for the

special purpose of being sent to the Gentiles. And, not having been present when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper among his Jewish disciples, he had a special communication himself from the Lord, upon the subject: in consequence of which, he inculcated it upon his converts among the Gentiles. Thus, in our text he says, "I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you," &c. Here is the plain, direct, divine authority, for the observance of the ordinance by Gentile churches. And in the twenty-sixth verse, the apostle defines, with equal clearness, the period during which that observance was to be continued, "As often as ye eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, *till he come!*" He is not yet come. And thus, the obligation is complete, and abiding. So truly so, that the Lord's own reproof may be addressed with emphasis to all who call themselves Christians, and do not receive the Lord's supper, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

How is it, that many who would shrink with shame from a wilful and systematic

and persevering transgression of any other commandment, seem perfectly at ease under a continual violation of this? Does the Bible contain a plainer commandment, than "Do this in remembrance of me?" The commandment to pray is not more direct and imperative. And if he who, year after year, avowedly refused to pray, would thereby forfeit all title to even the name of christian; is it not to treat the commandments of the Lord with an unwarrantable and wicked partiality, to continue to recognize as Christians, those who, year after year, in deliberate act and deed, answer to the Lord who says "Do this," and say, No, we will not do it? My brethren, our church is not chargeable with this partiality. Whosoever among you passes a year without receiving the Lord's supper, at the least three times, stands *ipso facto* excommunicated. But the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and we rejoice to think, that our excommunication exposes you to no *temporal* penalty.

II. We now consider, in the second place, the *nature* of this ordinance. "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not *the com-*



*munion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not *the communion* of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) The Lord's supper is a feast by faith, upon the sacrifice of the death of Christ.

It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. To this end he was made of a woman, made under the law; to this end he kept the law perfectly in heart and life without spot or blemish, magnified the law and made it honourable, as the expression of the unchanging will of God: to this end he endured the curse of the law against sin, and under that curse died, the just for the unjust: to this end, he exhausted that curse and rose again from the dead, triumphant over sin and death, and over him that had the power of death, that is the devil: to this end, he went up into heaven, and is set down at the right hand of God. To this end, he received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he shed forth abundantly to quicken into spiritual life, to dwell in, and walk in, his chosen people: and to accomplish this glorious end,



even the salvation of sinners, both body and soul, he will return again from heaven, bringing with him the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of the spirits of just men made perfect; and raising in a splendid likeness to his own heavenly body, the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of the bodies of the just, which have mouldered to corruption in the bowels of the earth, and in the depth of the wide sea.

Meantime, he has left amongst his people an affectionate pledge of his memory until his coming again, saying unto them, "This do in remembrance of me." He has given them an opportunity of showing, in the face of a wicked world, that they belong to him, that they are trusting to his death and waiting for his return. "As often as ye eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death until he come." And he has added a gracious assurance of spiritual communion with himself, such communion as he expresses by this extraordinary language, "eating the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinking his blood." "The cup of blessing,

which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" To our senses, the bread is bread, and the wine is wine; but to our faith in the Lord's appointment, the Lord's commandment, and the Lord's promise, the bread is the *communion* of the body of the Lord Jesus, and the wine is the *communion* of his blood. And the result is, the strengthening and refreshing of our souls spiritually, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed naturally, by bread and wine.

The natural body has appetites which need to be supplied, weaknesses which need to be strengthened, and languors which need to be refreshed. These are palpable facts, known and felt by all men: and it is in this school of facts (natural and obvious facts) that we are invited to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the spiritual truths of real vital religion.

The natural body, *while alive*, has appetites which need to be supplied. This is the daily experience of every one, though felt

more keenly by some, than by others. The fact is true in all; but the feeling of it varies, and will be best understood by those who are forced to suffer from hunger and thirst. What is it that can relieve this natural suffering? What can supply this natural want? What can satisfy this natural appetite? Can conversation about food do it? No, certainly. Can promises of food do it? No. Can asking for food do it? No. Can learned medical discussions about what is wholesome, and what is injurious, do it? No. Nothing can do it but eating and drinking. Show me a human body, which neither eats nor drinks, neither hungers nor thirsts, and I may at once and without doubt, pronounce upon it, that there is no life in it. But I must beware not to pronounce too speedily. There are such states as swoons, in which a man or woman may be alive indeed, though scarcely so in appearance; and where the appetites are suspended. In such cases, there may be life without eating or drinking, hungering or thirsting. But this can endure only a very little while, compared with man's natural life; so that as a general

statement, it may be said most truly of any natural body which neither eats nor drinks, hungers nor thirsts, that *there is no life in it.*

Every natural body, while alive, has weaknesses also which need to be strengthened, and languors which need to be refreshed. There is an ebb and a flow in the tide of natural life. If it rise at one time into exhilarating buoyancy; so does it at any other time sink into disheartening depression. The extent and frequency of these changes vary in different individuals; some are more calm and equable, some more sanguine and variable, but the fact is true of all, to *some* extent; so true, that concerning any human body, which is never influenced by weakness, or weariness, or languor, and never craves rest, repose, or reanimation, it might be confidently affirmed that *there is no life in it.*

There is a spiritual body as well as a natural body, and there is a spiritual life also with its own appropriate appetites, and weaknesses, and languors; and there is spiritual food, and rest, and medicine, rich and free and all-sufficient for the supply of every need.



The immortal spirit of a man, when alive unto God the Father of spirits, has a spiritual appetite. This is a fact known unto all men who are so alive unto God. By such as are not so alive, but as the apostle expresses it, *dead in trespasses and sins*, this fact cannot of course be felt, any more than natural appetites can be felt by a dead body. The instinctive longing of spiritual life, is to be like God. God is righteous; and the craving of the spiritual man is called a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The cause of separation from, and nonconformity with God, is sin: sin in the guilt of what is done, and in the pollution of what is felt. To regain nearness and likeness to God, the quickened soul longs with spiritual hunger and thirst, after pardon and holiness. Jesus Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, unto perfect pardon to every one who believeth. Jesus Christ is the bond of union with God, for the reception of the Holy Ghost, unto progressive holiness. After Jesus Christ, therefore, the quickened and well-instructed soul hungers and thirsts, and with Jesus Christ it is filled and satisfied. He is *the*



*bread of life.* The truth of God, as it stands connected with the *body* of Jesus, born of a woman, the dwelling place of a human soul, taken into mysterious unity of person with God, and touched with a feeling of every infirmity and every temptation of man, yet without sin ; under the law, and obedient to the law, and suffering the curse of the law, even unto the shedding of his *blood*, which is the life of the flesh, and the shedding of which bore testimony to the inward and spiritual agony of his soul under the wrath of God, which is spiritual death. The truth of God, as it stands connected with the *body* of Christ, anointed with the Holy Ghost, without measure, and exalted to the right hand of God to give the Holy Ghost the spirit of eternal life, the author of all conformity to God, in man. The everlasting truth of the holy God, in the free salvation of sinful men, thus condensed and exhibited in the body and blood of Christ—this and this alone can satisfy the cravings of the quickened immortal spirit. This truth, received and meditated upon by faith, is life to the soul, the bread which is the staff of life, the wine which

is the cordial of life. The human soul, which neither eats nor drinks, neither hungers nor thirsts after this spiritual food, has no spiritual life. And thus the Lord Jesus himself spake to the Jews, "I am that bread of life. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, (of course spiritually; there is, in Christ's living by the Father, no opportunity for even the pretence of transubstantiation, and he makes it parallel with our living by him,) so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John vi. 48, 57.) And thus he speaks to all weak and weary and languid souls, who feel the ebbings and flowings of spiritual life. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid; I will not leave you comfortless, I will send unto you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth. In the world, indeed, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and in me ye shall have peace. In patience possess ye your souls. Love me and keep my commandments. Meditate upon me, and feed upon me, in your

hearts by faith, with thanksgiving ; and until I come again, eat of this bread and drink of this cup in my name. I will be with you, and minister my truth to your souls, while you take these my creatures into your bodies. Thus commit yourselves, and pledge yourselves to my service in the sight of all men. " This do in remembrance of me," until I come.

Such is the nature of the Lord's Supper ! A commemoration : a communion : a confession. A commemoration, in which we call up into endeared affectionate remembrance, the death of Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and his command to his followers to do this. A communion, in which we enter into the personal application of the benefits, and the personal enjoyment of the blessings, freely bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus, and thus feed upon him, eating his body, and drinking his blood. And a confession, in which we boldly commit ourselves before men, and pledge ourselves solemnly before God, that we are and shall continue faithful soldiers and subjects and servants of Jesus Christ,

that he is our supreme and only king, and we will give allegiance to no other.

Hence it is called *sacrament* or oath. It is our divine oath of divine allegiance, to Jesus our king; and it is our oath of abjuration also, wherein we declare that no other potentate, no lust of the flesh, no lust of the mind, no worldly temptation, no evil spirit, hath or ought to have, or, as far as lieth in us, shall have, any authority or jurisdiction whatsoever over us, in any case whatsoever, temporal or spiritual, civil or ecclesiastical.

Thus, my dear brethren, you see to what you are invited. It is to give a noble pledge, it is to enjoy an exquisite pleasure, it is to perform a simple duty. To give a noble pledge that you will fight faithfully under the banner of the cross, against sin, the world, and the devil; to enjoy an exquisite pleasure, in the spiritual communion of Jesus our righteousness, and strength, and peace, and bond of holy union with our God for ever and ever; and to perform a simple duty, because Jesus says, *This do in remembrance of me.*

Why is this not done by all who call them-



selves the followers of Christ? Various objections are urged: let me request your attention, while,

III. I affectionately expostulate with the objectors.

Some objections are of an individual kind, some are of a collective kind. The objection of an individual character, which is most strongly and commonly urged, is, want of fitness or preparedness for so solemn a duty. The objector says, I am not worthy, and therefore I am afraid. There is a preparation necessary, and I am not prepared. Those words of the apostle terrify me, "*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily,*" &c.

This objection supposes both conscience and feeling in him who urges it. Conscience of not being prepared, and feeling of the danger of coming unprepared. In reply to it, therefore, I would affectionately address myself to conscience and feeling, and say to such an objector, Your conscience and feeling are awakened by the apostle's threat against doing this unworthily: how is it, that your conscience and feeling are not equally awakened by the Saviour's command, *This do?*



What sort of conscience is that which trembles lest you should obey unworthily, and does not tremble at disobedience altogether? You make it a matter of conscience not to come unprepared: how is it that you do not make it a matter of conscience to be prepared that you may come? Here is a plain duty which you neglect—and why? Because you have neglected to prepare for it. Thus, your objection, instead of even the appearance of an excuse for one sin, is a plain charge against yourself of another sin. You sin again, because you have sinned before. You disobey the command, *Do this*, because you have already disobeyed the command, *Prepare for this*. You break the Lord's commandment on Sunday, because you have been breaking it on Saturday, and Friday, and Thursday. O what a subtle delusion! Disobedience through the week is pleaded as an excuse for disobedience on the Sabbath; and disobedience in this point on the Sabbath, leaves the deceived sinner at a sort of imaginary liberty to spend next week as he did last. Break, O break, the cruel spell, which binds your infatuated soul! Begin to obey. When? Now. If you cannot at first obey as well as

you ought, yet obey as well as you can. Surely this is the path of wisdom, the path you pursue in other cases. Suppose you had a great number of businesses to perform in a certain day, so many that it required you to rise very early in the morning; and suppose you overslept yourself, so that it became impossible for you to get through all your work properly; would you say, I am not prepared now at this late hour to do as I ought, and therefore I will do nothing all day? No; but you would say, I am vexed that I cannot do as I ought to day; but come, let me begin, and do the best I can; I have lost two hours by one fault of negligence, but that is no reason why I should lose ten more by another fault of wilful disobedience. Nay, even in religious things, you act upon this principle. Were you prepared this morning to pray, and sing, and hear the word of God as you ought, with all due reverence and devotion, and without any distracting thought? No, truly. Then what did you do? did you say, I am not prepared to attend divine service worthily as I ought to do, and therefore I won't attend it at all? No; you said, or at least you acted as if you said, If I

cannot attend as well as I ought, I will go and attend as well as I can. And why not act upon the same principle as regards the Lord's supper? It is not true to say, there is danger in an unworthy receiving of the Lord's supper, but no danger in unworthy praying or hearing. There *is* danger, most fearful danger, in unworthy praying and hearing. It is through this, that so many are hardened into contempt of God's word and commandment. For irreverent abuse of the Lord's supper, the apostle tells the Corinthians that they were enduring diverse chastisements at the hand of God, "*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*" And for heedless or wilful disregard in hearing, Jesus proclaims the approaching ruin of the Jews, *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.* My dear brethren, awake, be quick, and lively, and reverent in the service of God. Stir up the gift that is in you, and maintain a posture of secret waiting for the inward and effectual breathings of divine grace. Do not, O do not, in listlessness of

I'll, this way, I'll be better, you shall be so, I'll

spirit, tamper with sacred things, but rouse yourselves to the holy endurance of spiritual effort. Remember, "Cursed is the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." (Mal. i. 14.)

The objection of a collective character which is most frequently urged, is our *open communion*. We are charged with admitting a promiscuous assembly of all sorts of characters, and taking no pains to keep our communicants more select, if not altogether spiritual. Objectors of this class say, that none but pious persons ought to approach the table, and it hurts them to see such ungodly characters as they do see, coming, and therefore, they cannot themselves come; the objection implying, as a matter of course, that they look upon themselves as pious persons, and discerning persons, and persons of a tender conscience.

1. Now, in reply to these, I observe, first, That all the endless varieties of human cha-



racter contained in a mixed congregation, however differing in hundreds of particulars, may, in reference to the question now before us, be arranged under three heads.—1. Decided Christians, living manifestly to the glory of God ; 2. Decided profligates, living manifestly to the scandal of the neighbourhood ; and, 3. The large undecided class between these two ; the multitude of every-day, common-place characters. These three comprise the adult population of every parish in the kingdom.

2. Now, concerning these, I observe, secondly, that our church has laid down a distinctly obvious line of separation, as regards the Lord's Supper,—“ And if any of those (who have signified their names to the curate) be an open and notorious evil liver, or have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended ; the curate, having knowledge thereof, shall call him, and advertise him, that in anywise he presume not to come to the Lord's table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former naughty life, &c. &c.



.... The same order shall the curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred *to reign*; not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's table, until he know them to be reconciled," &c. . . (Rubric before the Com.) Thus the duty of the minister is clear, whenever the evil living of any one who presents himself at the table, shall be notorious and scandalizing to the congregation, so that the minister shall be in no doubtful exercise of private judgment, or risk of being deceived.

3. But, thirdly, this does not content the objector. He complains still, that ungodly characters are admitted to the table, and do habitually attend. Now, supposing such an objector to be present among us this morning, I will affectionately and faithfully reason with him upon this point.

Do you know for a certainty, so as to be able to mention names, and prove your words, that any person of ungodly, scandalous life, is admitted to our table? Either you do know this of some one or more—say of one—or you do not. If you do not *know* this of any one, then allow me to warn you against the in-

dulgence of a slanderous, uncharitable state of mind. One clause in the apostolical description of true christian love, is, that it *thinketh no evil*. And truly nothing can be more remote from the genuine spirit of Christianity, than the habit of mind which is complacently satisfied with *self* as holy and godly, and is continually judging and condemning others as unholy and ungodly; though, when it comes to the point, nothing is certainly known, or can be proved against them. Take heed, therefore, lest in this habit of condemning others without proof, thou condemnest thyself. And remember the injunction of the apostle regarding this very duty of receiving the Lord's Supper; *Let a man examine, not his neighbour, but himself, and so let him eat of that bread, &c.*

But perhaps you will say, you do certainly know a wicked man who attends the Lord's table, and could mention his name, and prove it against him, and you cannot communicate with him. Then I ask, have you acted, and are you acting, according to scripture in this matter? Here is a man professing himself, by coming to the table, to be a christian

brother, but he has so grievously trespassed, that your conscience is wounded, and you cannot communicate with him. Now what is your Lord's direction in such a case? "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 15—17.) You cannot plead that the offence in question is not a trespass *against thee*; for of what greater trespass against thee could he be guilty, than that of driving you from the Lord's table? Have you then gone to this trespassing brother, and entreated him alone? When that failed, have you taken grave, and faithful, and select witnesses, and again admonished and expostulated with him? And when that failed, have you communicated the matter to your minister, that he might lay it before the bishop, and so

the church take official cognizance of it? If not, if you have done none of these things, if you have so neglected the plain commands of Jesus Christ in this matter, and then complain of thy professing brother's ungodliness, and assign it as a reason for separating yourself from the communion of the church, thinking yourself more holy, and more pure, and more scrupulous for so doing; then, with all affectionate solemnity I charge it upon your soul, to inquire, Is this conscience? Is this religion? Is this strict piety and godliness? Nay, nay, it is gross hypocrisy. You separate from the communion because of a neighbour's sin, and yet never reprove him for his sin. He is guilty in one way, and you are guilty in another way; and then you judge and condemn him, without condemning yourself. You communicate with him in sin, and then you proudly refuse to communicate with him in worship.

But perhaps you will say, What is the use of telling it to the minister or the bishop? what can the church do in it? I will answer this briefly, as far as it is of practical importance to any of you of this parish. If any



of you, after private admonition neglected, shall duly accuse either man or woman of those who communicate with us, of any scandalous crime, or ungodly course of life, committed and persevered in by him or her, and will undertake to prove and justify your accusation by two or three witnesses; I will undertake not to admit such an one to the communion, until he or she shall have publicly declared their repentance, and given satisfaction according to the nature of their offence.

Thus, if there be wicked doers at the Lord's table, it is not the church that is in fault, neither is it the minister of the church, but the fault lies with yourselves who complain of the evil. How is the church to know, but through her minister? And how is the minister to know, if you will not tell him? Designing people are on their guard when he is present, and he cannot get at the truth of their real conduct, as clearly as you can. Besides, he must not act upon his own precarious private judgment, but upon proof supplied, and after the complainant has in vain adopted the preliminary private course prescribed by our Lord.



Now, this presses you close, for you do not like to be informers, and you are ready to say, O no, I shall not undertake so thankless and troublesome an office; why should I get into hot water? I answer, the reason for such a line of conduct is the express command of the Lord Jesus Christ, *Tell it to the church*. You seem very strict as to the purity of his ordinances; so strict, that you will not communicate with an ungodly neighbour. Why are you not equally strict as to the authority of his commandments? Go to thy trespassing brother alone, saith the Lord Jesus—you have not done so. If that fail, take with thee witnesses—you have not done so. If that fail, *tell it to the church*—you have not done so. But you hate the character of an informer! And why so? In the case before us, to be obedient to Jesus Christ is to be an informer; but rather than be obedient, and an informer, you will be disobedient, and a schismatic. My brethren, this ought not so to be. Therefore, let it be so no longer. If you desire the revival of discipline, more strict than we already practise, begin by the performance of your own duty. I am ready to second you

by a corresponding performance of mine. If you faithlessly shrink from this, then surely you will see and acknowledge, the baseness (I cannot use a milder term) of seeking to screen yourselves, by joining in a senseless outcry against the church.

## LETTER VI.

PRACTICAL ABUSES IN THE CHURCH, NO JUST  
GROUND FOR SECESSION.

MY DEAR —,

I NOW come to a statement, on which you seem to lay much stress. You say, that a church consists, not of articles and formularies, but of living men; and, without denying the orthodoxy of the church of England, in theory, you nevertheless separate from her, alleging that her abuses are so gross, as to render a faithful ministry within her pale impracticable; and that, consequently, no child of God should continue in her communion.

But why should existing abuses in practice, however gross, render a faithful ministry impracticable, or justify secession? The abuses were not enacted by the authority of

the ruler: and although they may with faithless (and I am willing, though sorry, to add, disgraceful and dangerous) supineness, be connived at, and even, in a degree, practised, by some of those, whose duty it is to put an end to them; yet they are in no way binding upon the consciences of christian members or ministers. Let none such partake of them; but carefully avoid them, and boldly and honestly protest against them.

You say, such protests are vain. The abuses form part and parcel of the system. Amendment is hopeless. And therefore, in order to separate from the abuses, the system itself must be given up altogether. It is as radically Babylonish as popery itself, yea, in some respects, it is worse than popery: for popery recognizes some great truths (the continuance of miracles for instance) which the reformers overlooked, and which modern evangelicals spurn with contempt. Yes, you exclaim, the system is doomed of God, and unfit for spiritual men!

Gently, my friend: you take hastily for granted, what I think you cannot prove—to wit, that the abuses form part and parcel

of the system. I think otherwise: and I believe, that if amendment be hopeless, it is not so from the nature of the case itself, but from the characters of the persons in whom is the management. If we cannot accomplish this desirable result, still I must deny the justice of your inference, and maintain, on the contrary, that no practical abuses can justify secession. Is a son or a brother called upon to separate himself from the domestic circle and take up his abode in a strange house, because of certain practices in the family which he condemns, in which he cannot himself participate, and which he cannot prevail with his parents to have rectified? Would he be justifiable in yielding to such selfishness? or is it not rather his higher, nobler duty to deny himself, to bear his cross, and with respectful firmness to maintain his place, as a constant protester against the evil, a constant remembrancer of the good? Is a member of our senate called upon to forsake his place in either house of parliament, because of abuses in legislation which he deems ruinous, and against which it appears utterly vain for him any longer to



raise his voice? In every such case, is not secession unfaithfulness? Instead of standing in the breach to resist the evil to the uttermost, is not the seceder doing all he can towards a fulfilment of his own predictions of evil? Jonah like, he would rather the evil should come, than that he should be proved a false prophet. Alas, for human nature! Much that wears the lofty aspect of indignant patriotism and impassioned zeal, can be traced to a source no higher than selfishness and pride.

The true prophets of God lived and died members of the Jewish church, protesting against her abuses throughout their whole ministry. They proclaimed her corruptions with unsparing severity. They exhibited her as having no soundness in her, from the sole of the foot even unto the head. They enlarged upon her various abominations and immoralities: yet they seceded not. They did not say, 'A church consists not of covenanted articles, but of living men; and the living men now in the management, are so sunk in abuse, and so impenetrable to reproof, that amendment is hopeless, and therefore secession is inevitable.'

No! In their most unmeasured exposure of her abuses, they still acknowledge her to be the church of God.

Nothing can be more unequivocal than the language of Malachi. Nowhere are the practical abuses of the members of the Jewish church, both priests and people, more vigorously assailed than in the brief but energetic ministry of this prophet; yet so truly is the church itself, as a system, recognized as the church of God, that the corrupt nation, who withheld the tithes and offerings due to it, are charged with no less a crime than robbery of God himself. *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me! But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?* They do not seem to have been aware of the aggravated nature of their offence. Doubtless, it was not their avowed design to rob God. Nay, it is possible, that many of them thought they were doing God service, in withholding support or countenance from a corrupt, pharisaical church. But what saith the answer of God unto them by the prophet? *In tithes and offerings; ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*

*Bring ye all the tithes into the store house, that there may be meat in MINE house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.\**

The same may be said of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who distinguished between the system and the abuse. He exposed the abuses in their true colours. He detected and denounced the hypocrites. He showed how they had virtually rendered void the commandments of God, by their traditions. He predicted their ruin under the righteous judgments of an offended God. Nevertheless, he continued to sanction their ordinances by his presence, and to worship with them in the synagogues. 'The Jewish church was indeed ripe for destruction, and became more and more fearfully exposed thereto, as her abuses were persevered in, against more and more light and knowledge: but the system as such, was right, and although it was the duty of every enlightened man to *protest* and *reform*; yet so long as God was pleased in

\* Malachi iii. 8—10.

patient mercy to permit the system to stand, it was not the duty of any man to *secede*.

This distinction is of the utmost importance. The ten tribes of Israel fell into idolatry, *as a system*. *Disobedience to God's first commandment was essential to Jeroboam's institution at Bethel*. It became therefore the duty of God's children to secede; and many of them did so, and joined themselves to the kingdom of Judah.\* Judah's abuses in practice were no less abominable than those of her sister Israel; and with Israel's example before her, and in possession of her own superior light and knowledge, those abuses were proportionably more culpable and ruinous;† yet as they were not an essential part of the system, they did not warrant human secession from her, though they exposed her to divine wrath. In this, popery is strikingly parallel with Israel; and the reformed churches, like Judah, unless they repent and amend, (Rev. ii. 5,) are ripe for divine judgments, but not for human secession.

\* 2 Chron. xi. 13—17.

† Ezek. xxiii. *passim*.



You are fond of this analogy, and make free use of it, up to a certain point, in defence of some of your favourite positions. Let me intreat you to follow it up fairly, and see whether, as a whole, it teaches any thing less than what I have here advanced.

I am no abettor of abuses, neither do I advocate supineness or unfaithful indifference under them : but I cannot admit, that because some men have offended God in one way, we are called on to offend him in another. To protest faithfully and fearlessly, in word and deed, to live protesting, and (if God's patience with the abuses survive us) to die protesting, this is our duty, and let this be our resolute determination ; but so long as the system enacts nothing contrary to holy scripture, may the Lord mercifully preserve us from the selfishness of secession !\*

\* The parent and fruitful source of practical abuses of every description, and of an ingenuity of abuse which is truly disgusting, is *lay patronage*, inclusive of the nomination of bishops by the king's prime minister. For *nomination* it is, so long as a *præmunire* is in force against any recusant dean and chapter. The Bishop of Exeter, in a charge delivered to his clergy last year, illustrates, by some



I have no wish to imitate some of you, in arrogating to myself the power of judging my brother's *motives*. You have denounced us as covetous, charged our arguments with insincerity, and ascribed our defences of the church to a secret love of her worldly emoluments. Alas, my friend! how deplorably

painfully interesting instances, the corrupt practices carried on *in despite* of bishops, whose hands are tied by the existing laws of the land. (pp. 48—52.) Till this is amended, all bills concerning church temporalities are but child's play, or worse, as they manifest, but too clearly, an indisposition to any such reform as would render the church really efficient. Neither diminution nor distribution of revenues, neither composition nor commutation of tithes, neither the suppression of prebendaries nor the extinction of sinecures, will shut the door against flagrant corruption in practice; so long as party politics, personal relationships, or court intrigue, preside over the appointment and translation of bishops: and so long as lay patrons can demand induction to their livings for really (though not technically) unqualified persons—persons selected *because* of their unfitness, from either disease or old age, in order that the advertisement for the *sale* of the next presentation, may hold out the valuable inducement of early possession.

easy retaliation is! I might exhibit the frightful spectacle of a seceder whose love of singularity had overcome his love of tithes; or whose thirst to appear disinterested had secretly instigated him to accuse his brethren of covetousness; or whose vanity of personal distinction, ill brooking the self-denying retirement of a silent worshipper, and longing to bear a part in the edification of the congregation, had urged him gladly to avail himself of some plausible objection against the sobriety and order of our established worship. I might, I say, exhibit such a one, endeavouring to wrest the words of Scripture, or misrepresent the formularies of the church, into a sanction for separation. But retaliation is not my object—I write in self-defence. Retaliation upon this point is not my judgment. I do not believe that you are actuated by any such motives. Judging of you by myself, I give you full credit for perfect sincerity. Retaliation is not my temper. I desire to persuade, not to irritate; and I do pray, with full purpose of soul, for a blessing upon those who speak evil of us, and despitefully use us.

My object in this hint, is to remind you, that thirst of distinction is as deeply rooted a passion in the human heart, as thirst of money ; not perhaps existing in so many hearts, but fully as influential where it does exist—that to be distinguished in the path of order, requires extraordinary talents—that when men of ordinary talents are overcome by a desire to be somebody, and are determined to be spoken about, and “*monstrari digito* ;” their obvious course is to be disorderly. I wish thus to make you see, that when evil motives are ascribed, retaliation is at the door, and so to impress upon you a valuable present application, of Christ’s celebrated saying, “ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

I am faithfully yours.

## LETTER VII.

MODERN PRETENSIONS TO THE MIRACULOUS  
GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST, DESTITUTE  
OF ALL EVIDENCE.

MY DEAR ——,

I AM truly sorry to find, that instead of carefully replying to the arguments in my former letters, you have cut short all arguments, and all reason, by an appeal to what you suppose to be immediate and plenary inspiration.

This is, it must be confessed, a bold step. If your first assertion be admitted, there is truly an end of controversy. But can, or ought, such an assertion to be admitted without proof? And where is your proof?

I have carefully observed what has been going on. I have been thrown into close contact with some of the leaders in this affair.

I have been sedulously pressed to join it, by both male and female entreaties, and by the awful intelligence, oracularly repeated, that God himself had declared I would do so. On one occasion, a prophecy to this effect was addressed to me personally, with all pomp and power of manner and voice, by Mr. Baxter, when in the plenitude of his own assurance, and of their confidence in him, as peculiarly and highly gifted. You know, of course, that he has since forsaken the party, and declared his conviction, that "the power" among them is satanic.

On the same occasion I heard a Mr. Taplin, who was *made to speak* (as they express it) *in a tongue*. At first, they thought that the tongue would turn out to be a language, and lead to some missionary success. There was something rational in this expectation, had the gift of languages been indeed revived; and at that period, the persons in question had not given up their reason. But the expectation failed, simply because the gift was not, and is not, revived. And the persons who quitted Scotland, with, as we were informed, lively hope of being directed by the



Lord into some region of heathenism, where the difficulty of the language had hitherto proved a barrier to all missionary labour; have for nearly two years been residing in my little parish, in the county of Surrey, and edifying a congregation of from fifty to two hundred persons, collected chiefly from Shere, and Guildford, and Godalming.

The missionary project being abandoned, they found out another use for *the tongue*. It is difficult to say how they would have managed, or to what device they must have been driven, had  $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\eta$  been uniformly translated *language*, as it might very properly have been, throughout the Epistle to the Corinthians.\*

\* The tongue, the physical organ by which language is uttered, is used metaphorically, to denote the language itself. In 1 Cor. xiv. 9, the word is used literally, to signify the material organ. "Except ye utter, *by the tongue*, words easy to be understood," &c. The only other passage, connected with this subject, which requires absolutely that the word *tongue*, and not *language*, should be used, is Acts ii. 3, where we read, that pieces of fire, similar in shape to cloven tongues (the organ of speech)

I heard Mr. Taplin, and what I heard was this. I write it in all seriousness before God,

floated through the air and rested upon the apostles. This was an outward symbol of the effect to be produced upon them: to wit, that they should speak diverse languages. And accordingly, in every succeeding verse of that narrative, the word *language* may be substituted, with advantage and clearness, for the word *tongue*. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak *in other languages*, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The assembled strangers, of various countries, were amazed, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. Behold, they said, are not all these which speak, Galileans, and how hear we every man *in our own language*? Parthians, and Medes, &c. &c., we do hear them speak *in our languages* the wonderful works of God. In this narrative, two Greek phrases, *τη ἰδία διαλεκτῷ*, and *ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις*, are used indiscriminately, the one literal, the other metaphorical: and in the translation they are rendered indiscriminately by two English phrases, *his own language* and *our tongues*, the one literal, the other metaphorical. But neither here nor elsewhere in Scripture, is there the slightest reason to suppose that *λαλεῖν γλῶσση* means any thing else but *to speak in a language*, (of course with a tongue.) So clearly so, that without *ερμηνεία γλωσσῶν*, the interpretation of the languages, the gifted

without scoff, or sneer, or ridicule; but simply and *bonâ fide* descriptive of what I heard. It was neither more nor less than what is commonly and vulgarly called jargon, uttered *ore rotundo*, and mingled with Latin words, among which I distinctly heard, more than once, *amamini, amaminor*.

The same gentleman afterwards read the first chapter of the first Epistle of St. Peter, in a sort of unnatural recitative, which, as I was informed, was reading *in the Spirit*. That is, as they define it, it was not he who read, but the Holy Ghost in him, merely using the voice and lips of the man, as an organ of utterance unto men. On this supposition, the reading might have been expected to be perfect indeed. My ear was brethren were forbidden to speak them in the congregation, though there might possibly have been unbelieving foreigners there, whose languages they were, and to whom therefore they might have been useful. This casual benefit was to be sacrificed, to the general good, and order, and intelligent edification of the church. It was for a practice the reverse of this, and the disorder and confusion inevitably consequent thereupon, that the apostle rebuked the Corinthians so sharply.

struck by deviations from our authorized version. I had a Greek Testament in my hand, and perceived at a glance, that the deviations were palpably incorrect. One of them was the omission of an important word, to the utter marring of the sentence. That Mr. Taplin should make a mistake in his reading, might be very natural ; but that the Holy Spirit, speaking by the physical organs of Mr. Taplin, should misrepresent the holy Scriptures, was more than I could receive. I can truly say, that my predominant feeling, on the occasion alluded to, was astonishment at the possibility of men of mind and education, or even of common sense, being for a moment deluded by such paltry and profane absurdities. Before I left the house, I plainly declared my judgment in the matter, to Mr. Irving. His reply was strange, and highly characteristic of the system : but it was private, and I do not feel at liberty to quote it.

In vain I inquired for *proof*, that the voice, to which such implicit deference was paid, is the voice of God. The demand for



evidence was indeed denounced with awful severity, as carnal, as tempting God, as fighting against the Spirit. You will remember, however, that the apostle Peter has exhorted us to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us, *a reason of the hope that is in us.*”\* If, therefore, we embrace a hope for which we have no reason to give, we transgress this apostolical rule. It is true, indeed, that we believe many sublime mysteries, revealed in the Scriptures, which we do not comprehend, and concerning which we are not capable of reasoning. But we have most reasonable and satisfactory proofs of this great truth, that **THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.** *And being first reasonably satisfied of the DIVINE ORIGIN of the book, we then reasonably surrender our reason to its CONTENTS.* Do not, I entreat you, allow this distinction to escape your notice and candid reflection. What, we ask, is reasonable evidence of the *divine origin* of these utterances; which if you give us, we will then surrender our reason to their *contents*,

\* 1 Pet. iii. 15.



as you do, and as we all profess to do, to the holy Scriptures. Till then, we must, in the responsible exercise of our reason, reject pretensions which are at once so supremely arrogant in their claims, and so utterly destitute of authority in their source. I have, indeed, been gravely told, that "there is evidence enough to them that believe." The true meaning of this is, that there is no *evidence* at all; but that there is *delusion* enough to entrance, and, for a time at least, to enchain all who allow their reason to be prostrated under the first step of unproved assertion, claiming plenary inspiration. "C'est le premier pas qui coute." *If* the voice be the voice of God, objections to the things spoken are manifestly most unreasonable. To receive the voice as the voice of God, without rational proof that it is so, is wilful madness without a parallel. No man should be profane enough to arraign, for one moment, at the bar of reason, the *contents* of a well-attested divine communication. And no man should be absurd enough to admit, without reasonable proof, the *divine origin* of any communication. Pardon the repetition with which I

press this distinction. I have felt its importance, and I am thankful to add, its success, in delivering many sincere but ill-instructed inquirers, from the temptation of identifying these pretensions with scriptural mysteries; and the consequent deception of supposing that the same appeals to faith, in things above reason, were applicable to both. This is, in truth, one of the strongest holds of the delusion. By this I have seen some of the pious poor terrified, lest, in rejecting these pretensions, they might be committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. The pastors and evangelists of the sect take advantage of this holy but ignorant fear, and work upon it. Some of them, I have no doubt, honestly participate in it. And the artificial solemnity and stage effect, the long pauses and sudden bursts, in their meetings, are well calculated to maintain this sort of superstitious excitement of the feelings. This, if I do not greatly mistake, will account for all, or nearly all, of their *sincere* disciples among the poor. They *have* followers, as I too well know, of a very different description.

Again, then, I ask, where is your proof ?

Will you advance, as some have done, a most confident assertion, that it is so, because *they know* it to be so? *They are sure*, from the effect produced on their own hearts, and consciences, that the voice is of God. They say, "If the Spirit of God be in *us*, then, the spirit which speaks in these dear brethren, is the Spirit of God; which if you deny, you either accuse us of wilful falsehood, or of being possessed of a devil."

Assurance of a fact may be satisfactory to those who are assured; but it supplies no proof to others. I do not question the sincerity of their assurance, or of yours, but sincerity is not always a test of truth. "There is a way," saith Solomon, "which *seemeth right* unto a man, and the end of it are the ways of death." I must, therefore, still demand some reasonable evidence, which is transferable from man to man, and on the strength of which I can obey the above-mentioned injunction of the apostle Peter. If you say, that sincerity of conviction is, after all, the best evidence which any man can have *for himself*; then allow me, for once, to claim the benefit of it, and tell you a circumstance,

which, upon your own principles, you must admit to be of some weight. Mr. Drummond, who, as you know, is one of the leading pastors of the new sect, in his kind anxiety to convince me of the truth of what he felt himself to be so valuable, wrote me word, that the Holy Spirit in one of the Lord's vessels, in his house, had plainly testified concerning me, that I was resisting the convictions of my own conscience in opposing the work, as he expressed it, for that I knew in my heart the work was of God. Now, it is impossible for the sincerity of conviction, in any man, upon any point, to be stronger and more satisfactory than mine was, and is; that the spirit, or the man, or the woman, who made this assertion concerning me, said what is not true. When I gave this reply, I was accused of falsehood, and the utterance of the voice respecting my dishonesty of mind, has been repeatedly and confidently referred to, since. This shows the degree of reliance which they can place upon the veracity and assurance of another. But it does not seem to have occurred to them, that such knives have two edges.

Some of the more zealous and talented



advocates of the present pretensions, have urged in their support, that the (supposed) gifted persons, though ignorant women and children, have spoken deeper and more sublime theology, than any to be found in our best divines.

This is an appeal to the Scriptures, the treasury of all sound theology. And, of course, while interpretations of scripture vary, judgments will vary, as to the merits of the new school. To me, their theology (if it deserve the name) is conclusive against their claims. The doctrine of redemption by incarnation, instead of by blood-shedding; the denial of the substitution of Jesus for the sinner, as a vicarious sacrifice; the mingling of the righteousness of Christ and the character of the believer, in the article of justification; their attempts to explain, for I cannot call them explanations, of our Lord's experience in the flesh; and their assertions of the perfection of purity and holiness in themselves. All these are, in my judgment, so diametrically opposed to the word of God, that I must either reject them, or give up my Bible. The choice is easy.



I am fully aware of the hardihood with which it is denied, that any of these doctrines so objectionably stated, are maintained by them ; and I have experienced, more than once, their evasive ingenuity when brought to the point. As soon as they are forced to feel the argument going against them, they exclaim against us as quibblers about words, dishonest logicians, haters of holiness, and therefore determined not to admit the Lord near us, but to shelter our cherished iniquity amongst the foul beasts and unclean spirits of Babylon the great. But let inquirers beware : much that is not put forward at first, is involved in their system. I have heard a man who was an elder in one of their churches, exclaim in bitterness of spirit, ‘ O ! could I but have known a year ago, what this would have led me to, nothing on earth could have induced me to join it : the Lord forgive me ! ’

We freely admit that much and valuable truth is sometimes spoken by a few of the party, who were well instructed in the Scriptures before the delusion commenced ; but we deny what they endeavour to represent as a

necessary inference from this fact. Upon the admitted soundness of some of their statements, it is triumphantly asked, What! would Satan cast out Satan? Would Satan preach the truth as it is in Jesus? Then is his kingdom divided against itself, and cannot stand! O no, it is hastily added, impossible! And this proves, beyond a doubt, that the Spirit of God is among us.

I answer, Satan would not indeed cast out Satan, neither is there any, the slightest proof, in the present case, of Satan having been cast out. But Satan would cause his instruments to utter much truth, if by so doing he could gain circulation for a pernicious error. We read of a remarkable attempt of this kind, in the instance of the young woman possessed by an evil spirit, who followed Paul and his company, at Philippi, and cried, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."\* What she said was true. But the object of the father of lies, in causing her so to speak, is plain. By bearing testimony to Paul and

\* Acts xvi. 16, 17.

Silas, she was likely to gain the confidence of many, who beheld, in those men, the genuine credentials of a divine mission. Having this confidence, she would then have abused it, by bearing similar testimony to impostors, who would thus have become identified with Paul, and whose subsequent falsehood and misconduct would have brought reproach upon the apostle and his sacred cause. It is in an ingenious mingling of truth and error, that the most subtle devices of Satan will ever be found. In fact, no other species of device could, for a moment, succeed in beguiling sincere christians. No other species of device could ever wear the aspect, or possess the power, ascribed by Jesus Christ, to some of the predicted delusions of the last days, when "false anointed ones, and false prophets shall arise, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Another argument put forward in their defence is, the superior personal holiness and devotedness to God, of the (supposed) gifted persons, and the similar effects produced upon those who believe them.

True holiness and devotedness to God, are not to be judged of rashly or hastily. Nothing but endurance and trial and perseverance against difficulties, can put them to an unequivocal test. Superstitious excitement, and devotedness to a party, may be seen and known at once. I deny not that some of the individuals in question may be very excellent and amiable persons; nay, I am fully satisfied that our great adversary is too wily to put forward any of his schemes without a plausible cloak; and I well remember that Arius and Pelagius were men celebrated for personal devotedness, austerity, and zeal. Where the spiritual enemy of mankind perceives false doctrines, ruinous to the souls of men; it is an enterprize worthy of his malice to withdraw from such persons even his usual quantum of temptation to moral evil, and leave them wholly unmolested by the assaults of spiritual wickedness. The result would be a mildness and equanimity of temper, and an amiability of moral character, highly creditable to their profession, and thereby conducive to the propagation of their erroneous opinions.



This will account for what has puzzled some of our friends exceedingly, who are occasionally thrown in contact with Socinian relatives, and marvel how they can be so mild and moderate in their temper and deportment, and so upright in all their dealings.

But whatever truth there may be in the claim to superior holiness, on behalf of some individuals connected with this delusion, I must deliberately deny the justice of it, when advanced generally in support of the pretensions. The christian charity of their opponents has been signally manifested, in the general and unexamined admission of this claim. But what is the fact? The fact is, that no such superiority exists. On the contrary, in all that belongs to meekness, and patience, and forbearance, and humility, and abstaining from *evil speaking*; they are far, very far, inferior to their christian brethren.

It is true indeed, that they are, beyond question, more fervid, in all their own peculiar ordinances, as to the times and places of their meetings, their modes of worship, and of the distribution among the poor, of the Lord's bounties, as they call their collec-



tions: and, in a word, in all that belongs to the will-worship of their idol. So long as all this is attended to, with unhesitating submission to the voice, every thing seems fair and attractive, and the conductors of the work seem amiable, and holy, and winning. But the moment any doubts are felt and expressed; the moment any thing approaching to reasonable evidence is required, or any reasonable objection is urged, against what happens to be the order of the day, the spell is broken. Instead of following the apostolical rule of "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" they denounce, with a virulence truly terrific, (and with an air of infallibility which would be ludicrous, were it not so deplorable,) the wickedness of "sitting in judgment on the ways of the Lord," "defying the Lord's orders," "presuming to use carnal reason after God has spoken; and profaning the ordinance of God's house." All their seeming and boasted mildness is gone: and unless the recusant immediately submit his reason and his scriptural knowledge to the tyranny of the voice, crimination and recrimination are the consequence.

This is no fanciful sketch. It is drawn from the life of facts. And when to this we add, that in all that appertains to their peculiarities, they have not yet had time to grow weary, we shall be better qualified to put a just estimate upon their claim to devotedness. There is something in the *esprit du corps*, which supplies, *for a time*, to the advocates of a novelty, a sort of artificial stimulus, guarding them against inconsistencies, for the honour-sake of their party. And as regards the leaders, there is an adulation, dear to the human heart, paid to them, under the plausible name of submission to an ordinance of God. In fact, obedience to the pastor, in the various items of their ceremonial, is, at this time, and in this place, made the test of holiness in the church ;\* while the

\* One of the party, possessed of more natural understanding and good sense than most of those around her, told me, that she felt it her duty to apprise the pastor, that there was unholiness among the communicants. That her information, instead of being received as she intended it, was rejected as a false slander, and the church declared to be a holy church. And, that when facts were adduced,

vaunting word of separation from others, is,  
 ‘ Cease ye from *man*—go no more to hear  
*man*—come to US, and hear *God* !’

It is well remarked by Mr. Goode, that,  
 “ the subtilty of this delusion is principally  
 seen in its enabling a person to assume the  
 garb of humility, while he is at the same  
 time attracting to himself, from those who  
 believe his pretensions, all the attention and re-  
 spect with which the personal presence of God  
 himself could inspire them. Such humility is  
 very like that of the Pope, who, while he calls  
 himself “ the servant of the servants of God,”  
 contrives, by claiming to be God’s vicegerent,  
 to obtain almost divine honours, and “ to  
 sit in the temple of God, showing himself  
 that he is God.”\*

in confirmation of her testimony, even their stub-  
 born evidence was resisted, by a complacent appeal  
 to that grand ultimatum, “ they are obedient *to their*  
*pastor*, and obedience is holiness.”

\* *Modern Claims to the Gifts of the Spirit*, &c. by  
 the Rev. William Goode. 8vo. Hatchard, 1833—  
 p. 230. Permit me, to request your early and care-  
 ful attention to this admirable treatise; you will  
 find in it a simplicity of narrative, a forbearance in

Sincerity is indispensable to the lowest grade of true holiness, and there are some proceedings of this party which it is certainly difficult to reconcile with both sincerity and sanity. It might have been anticipated that to as many as were sincere in their belief of the divine spirit of prophecy speaking among them, palpable failures in the accomplishment of the predictions would have proved conclusive, in convincing them of their error. But such has not been the case. Ingenuity is as fertile, as fanaticism is credulous. And the most flagrant opposition between the utterance and the event, is solved, nay, in some cases, boastingly quoted as on their side, by a gratuitous (it can scarcely be called an ingenious) application of a clause, doubtfully translated, in our version of the book of Numbers.

God had promised that the Israelites *as a nation* should possess the land of Canaan. Several generations died, after the promise was first made, and before it was fulfilled.

application, a force of argument, and a wealth of authority, both ancient and modern, which cannot fail of their effect upon a mind like yours.



Yet still the nation, as such, was entitled to expect the fulfilment of the word of him, who is faithful and true. The promise was repeated, more than once, in the same general way ; and each succeeding generation was made to know the Lord's delay, which might seem to the impatient among them, to be a breach of his promise, but was not so. It was repeated again, by Moses, when the nation of Israel was brought out of Egypt ; yet, even then, another generation, with the exception of two individuals, was cut off, before the promise was fulfilled. The reason assigned for this, was their wickedness. " Because all those men, which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land, which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."\* An exception is then made, in favour of Caleb and Joshua, and the threatening proceeds against the remainder of that generation, that they should die in the wilderness, and be

\* Numbers xiv. 22, 23—34.



forced to know *the fury of the Lord's anger*—so some translate the phrase; the Lord's *vengeance*, as others translate it;\* the Lord's delay as regarded his promise, in point of fact; and what might seem to them (had they been flattering themselves, that because they were brought out of Egypt, they must surely be brought into Canaan) to be his breach of promise; but was not so. It was no more a *breach* of his promise to postpone the fulfilment of it beyond their lives, than it had been

\* תננוֹאֵה N. f. a withdrawing, a failure. Numb. xiv. 34. Job xxxiii. 17.—*Newman's Lexicon.*

"The Greek translatheth," *Yee shall know the wrath (or indignation) of mine anger.* The Chaldee, "*Yee shall know that ye have murmured against mee.*" Sol. Jarchi expoundeth it, *My breach, in that yee have broken (that is, turned away) your heart from following after mee.*" This word is often used by Moses. In Numbers xxxii. 7. *Wherefore breake yee the heart of (that is, discourage yee) the sonnes of Israel from going, &c.* And in Numbers xxx. 5. *If her father breake (that is, disallow) her, disannull her promise.*"—*Ainsworth on the Pentateuch, in loco.*

"The Israelites had in effect charged God (verse 3) with failing in his promise: and God here says, They shall know, or experience, *my failure.*"—*Parkhurst.*

to postpone the fulfilment of it beyond the life of Joseph. Joseph died, without the slightest apprehension of any breach of the promise, and *in fact, there was no breach*; for the promise was, that the Israelites should be brought into the land of Canaan, and they were brought in accordingly. Yet, because the concluding phrase of the thirty-fourth verse, is translated *my breach of promise*; the passage is recklessly applied to the special, limited, defined, and *individual* cases of the present pretensions; and when the event falsifies the utterance, the individual is charged with provoking wickedness, and solemnly informed that he has been made to know the Lord's breach of promise, and that his case affords conclusive proof of the spirit of prophecy being indeed revived in the church! Supposing the men who argue thus to be sane, what becomes of their sincerity; and, without sincerity, what becomes of their claim to superior holiness? Thus saith the Lord, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, *if the thing follow not, nor come to pass*; that is the thing which *the Lord*

*hath not spoken*, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.”\*

Feeling, as it may be presumed, the lack of even the appearance of scriptural evidence in support of their claims, they have lately printed (but not published) and circulated in that sort of underhand way,† which proves at once the existence and the inefficacy of con-

\* Deut. xviii. 22.

† Mr. Blunt, in an Appendix to his sermons on the trial of the spirits, has given a quotation from another tract, circulated in the same clandestine way, entitled, “A Narrative of the Circumstances which led to the setting up of the Church of Christ at Albury.” As I am made to occupy a prominent place in that narrative, and as my ministry is assailed in no common language of denunciation, it may be expected, as it may be right, that I should here say something upon the subject. It need not be much. The manuscript was sent to me, with an invitation to comment upon it. I refused to enter into any details, protesting against the whole strain of the narrative, as a misrepresentation of the facts of the case—facts, many of which were retained in my recollection by a correspondence (then and still lying on my table) which had been carried on during the period referred to. But I forbear: I am anxious to

science and shame, a tract, in which the question is put, "Where is it promised in scripture," that *in these last times* (i. e. immediately before our Lord's coming) the Holy Ghost is to be poured out in a miraculous manner? And it is answered by a reference to the *Latter Rain*; in which it is taken for granted, without even an attempt at proof, that the rain upon the land of Canaan means the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous gifts, upon the christian church.

Upon this subject, I must write to you more fully, another time.

I am faithfully yours.

*Postscript.*—Have you seen Mr. Sargent's

cherish feelings of christian love, and shrink from *private personalities*, even in self-defence. In truth, the narrative in question is its own best refutation, and I am content, with my fellow sufferer, Mr. Blunt, to leave my ministerial character in higher hands. Most cordially do I join that gentleman in the hope, that few will read even the brief extracts which he has supplied, without "an earnest petition at a throne of pardoning and restraining grace for the writer of them, and for those who are following in his present erratic course."

interesting Memoir of the Rev. Mr. Thomson? In reference to certain popish absurdities practised in the island of Madeira, he makes this striking remark. *Enthusiasm possesses a resiliency equal to any pressure: the superincumbent weight of common sense, observation, and experience, fails to crush it, and serves only to increase its spring and reaction.* p. 140.



## LETTER VIII.

## THE LATTER RAIN.

MY DEAR —,

EVERY sentence of the Bible is from God, and every man is interested in the meaning of it. Without an appearance of support from the Bible, no opinion can be received by the christian church, and no sect can long maintain its ground. The differences are of interpretation, not of standard. Of course every sect calling itself christian, claims the Bible as on its side. There are, however, some parts of the Bible, so plain, so familiar, so long in use for the support of the good old way; that they cannot, without inconvenient and suspicious wresting, be adduced in support of novelties.

Consequently, the more difficult and less familiar parts of holy scripture are appealed to: unproved interpretations apparently favourable to the new fancy, are *assumed*, and the most confident assertions are grounded thereupon. These assertions pass with many for proofs. One reason of this melancholy result is, that no sound interpretation of those passages has been habitually given, and no definite meaning of them lodged in men's minds. "It is our duty," says Bishop Horsley, "to facilitate the attainment (*viz.* of scriptural knowledge) by clearing difficulties. It may be proper to *state* those we cannot *clear*—to present our hearers with the interpretations that have been attempted, and to show where they fail,—in a word, to make them masters of the question, though neither they, nor we, may be competent to the resolution of it. This instruction would more effectually secure them against the poison of modern corruptions, than the practice, dictated by a false discretion, of avoiding the mention of every doctrine that may be combated, and of burying every text of doubtful meaning. The corrupters of the christian

doctrine have no such reserve." \* Certainly not. On the contrary, the false discretion here referred to, is eagerly seized upon by the schismatic, who points to these neglected passages as containing the church's condemnation; and exults in the supposed proof of this condemnation, derived from this neglect. Thus, the schismatic *seems* to be supported by a large and hitherto unexplored mine of scriptural truth: and the church's exposition, though sound, and therefore sure to be eventually triumphant, comes too tardy for the present controversy; and does not apply its balm, until after many hasty victims of the delusion have been grievously wounded.

A slight acquaintance with the history of the church will supply illustrations of these remarks. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be.* Your new sect is now claiming scriptural support, by the old practice of confident assertion, grounded upon assumed interpretations. And we are called on to observe concerning it, what Bishop Horsley observed concerning the Socinian "corrupters of the christian doctrine" in his

\* *Sermon on St. James, v. 8.*

day; that they have *no reserve*; but, on the contrary, deal most freely with those comparatively dark and difficult passages of Scripture, concerning which the people have not been supplied with accurate and detailed information, and, of course, can have formed no definite and sound judgment.

A very important instance of this occurs in the use now attempted to be made, as I intimated in my last letter, of the scriptural expression, *the latter rain*. Concerning this, it is confidently asserted, without a shadow of proof, that it means the revival of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost in the christian church, in this the latter portion of her history. And this assumed interpretation is then pleaded in support of the present pretensions to those gifts.

Upon this, as upon every subject mentioned in the Bible, it is highly desirable to have well-defined and scriptural views. My present object is to examine the meaning of the expression *latter rain* in every passage of Scripture where it occurs. These are nine in number. Deuteronomy xi. 10—17; Job xxix. 23; Proverbs xvi. 15; Jeremiah iii. 3;



ibid. v. 24; Hosea vi. 3; Joel ii. 23; Zechariah x. 1; and James v. 7. The word *rain* occurs in a vast variety of other passages, which may serve to illustrate the subject; but the expression *latter rain* is to be found only in these nine places.

I. Deut. xi. 10—17. “For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and vallies, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, *the first rain, and the latter rain*, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and then the Lord’s wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land



yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you."

In this passage we learn the primary and literal meaning of the promise of rain. The condition of the land of Canaan is contrasted with that of the land of Egypt. In Egypt there was no rain. (Compare Zech. xiv. 18.) The land was flat, and watered by the overflowing of the river Nile. "Such vegetable productions as required more moisture than was occasioned by the inundation of the Nile, were refreshed by water drawn out of the river by instruments, and lodged in capacious cisterns. When therefore their various sorts of pulse, melons, sugar-canes, &c., all which are commonly ploughed in rills, required to be refreshed, they struck out the plugs from the bottom of the cisterns; and then the water, gushing out, was conducted from rill to rill by the gardener, who was always ready, as occasion required, to stop and divert the torrent, by turning the earth against it *with his foot*, and opening at the same time with his mattock a new trench to receive it." \* This illustrates the language of the tenth

\* Dr. Shaw. *Apud Mant and D'Oyley, in loco.*

verse. But the situation of Canaan was different. It was a land of hills and vallies. To water it as Egypt was watered, was altogether impracticable. It was wholly dependent for its fertility upon the moisture which came down from heaven. "God represents to them what a noble country he was going to bestow on them, but of such a condition as would keep them in constant dependence upon his favour, for the blessing of it."\* The blessing of rain was promised, like other temporal blessings, to the Jewish nation, while they were obedient. Without this blessing, a famine must inevitably and speedily ensue; and this was threatened as a temporal punishment if the Israelites became disobedient.

Upon the language of the promise in this passage of Deuteronomy, Mr. Cruden remarks, "Twice in the year, there fell plenty of rain in Judea, in the beginning of the civil year, about September or October: and half a year after, in the month of Abib or March, which was the first month in the ecclesiastical or holy year, whence it is called the latter

\* *Bishop Patrick. Ibid.*

rain in the first month." Joel ii. 23.\* And Dr. Blayney thus paraphrases the expression, "The first, or the autumnal rain, before seed time, to prepare the ground for being broken up to receive the seed: the latter, or the vernal, before harvest, to fill the ears of corn."

Thus it appears, that the expression, *the latter rain*, as used by Moses, signifies, literally, the vernal rain upon the land of Canaan, and there is no intimation of the expression having any other meaning.

II. The second passage in which the latter rain is mentioned, is in the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Job, 20—25. "My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain: and they opened their mouth wide as for *the latter rain*. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners."

Many seek the ruler's favour, and the rich

\* Concordance, word *Rain*.

have many friends, or at least many who seem to be friends while days of riches and prosperity, and authority continue. Job had his season of greatness, during which, his favour was courted, and valued at a high rate. To this he mournfully refers in the passage now quoted. Fallen into adversity, forsaken and despised, his too faithful memory dilates upon the particulars of his former pre-eminence. He had been the oracle of his country. When others could not gain a hearing or command attention, all men gave ear to him. They waited, and kept silence at his counsel; implying that as nothing could be said against, so nothing could be added to, his wisdom. He exhausted the subject: therefore, after his words they spake not again. The richness of his eloquence was as delightful, as the wisdom of his counsel was unanswerable. His speech dropped upon his hearers like the dew, and nothing could better illustrate their avidity to catch his gracious words, than the dried ground opening its chinks, as so many impatient mouths to drink in the rain, the copious showers of *the latter rain* from heaven. This is a poetical similitude.



derived from the literal fact, to which we have already referred. And thus it appears, that the expression *the latter rain*, as used by Job, signifies literally, the vernal rain upon the parched land of Canaan; neither is there any intimation of the expression having any other meaning.

III. The next passage in which the words are used is a very similar one. It is Proverbs xvi. 15. "In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of *the latter rain*."

The falling of rain was so essential to the comfort and even the existence of the Jewish nation in their land, that it became a proverb for every blessing. The kings of the east had the absolute power of life and death over all their subjects. The light or approbation of the king's countenance was therefore, literally, life; and his favour was as full as security, and peace, and honour, and plenty, to those who enjoyed it, as a cloud, big with the latter rain, was full of refreshment and fertility to the ground. Words similar to the first clause of this verse, are applied in Psalm xxx. to the Lord him-



self, the great King, who possesses, in the highest sense, absolute power of life and death eternal. "In his favour is life," says David, and there is no reason to doubt that, in the passage before us, from the book of Proverbs, a greater than Solomon is referred to, even he, concerning whom it is written again, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth."\* Still, however, whether as illustrative of political or religious blessings, the latter rain was itself literal, supplying a poetical and very beautiful similitude, derived from the literal fact. It would be a perversion of the language to say that the latter rain means the king's favour, or any of the political or religious blessings dispensed by the son of David; for then, what becomes of the *comparison* instituted in these passages? His favour is *AS* a cloud of the latter rain; he shall come down *LIKE* rain upon the mown grass: *AS* showers that water the earth. To say that *rain*, in such passages, means any thing but literal rain, is, it must be repeated, a perversion of the language. It is to *con-*

\* See Psalm lxxii. *passim*.

*found*, in the exposition, things which are *compared* in the text. This remark applies to Deuteronomy xxxii. 1, 2,\* and all similar passages; and it is of the utmost consequence in this inquiry, to observe this, and bear it in mind. Because, whereas the sacred writers derive illustrative comparisons from the rain; commentators have carelessly represented as identical, things which the Bible represents as only similar. This has been carried so far, that it is gravely asserted, nay, assumed as a settled point, though without the slightest proof, that the latter rain *means*, the full and final outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It would be curious, and it might perhaps be useful, to trace and analyze the process by which this strange and erroneous result has been reached; for there is not a single passage

\* "Give ear, O! ye heavens, and I will speak: and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop AS the rain: my speech shall distill AS the dew; AS the small rain upon the tender herb, and AS the showers upon the grass." Deut. xxxii. 1, 2.

See also, Isaiah lv. 10, 11. "AS the rain cometh down," &c. &c.; "SO shall my word be," &c. &c.

of the Bible in which the latter rain is even *compared to*, much less identified with, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

It will, however, be evident to every unprejudiced inquirer, that the expression, *the latter rain*, as used by Solomon, in the comparison he institutes between it and the king's favour,\* signifies literally, the vernal rain upon the land of Canaan; and that no intimation is given of the expression having any other meaning.

IV. The next passage in which we find the expression now under examination, is Jeremiah iii. 2, 3. "Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with; in the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no *latter rain*; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed."

\* As a cloud of the latter rain—"As a cloud producing the grateful rain of spring." See note at Deut. xi. 14. Job uses a similar comparison, to express how he was esteemed and desired by his people." Job xxix. 23.—*Calmet apud Mant. and D'Oyly: in loco.*

We have already seen in Deuteronomy xi. 16, 17, that one of the punishments which the Lord held out against the children of Israel, in the event of their falling into any idolatry, was, that he would shut up heaven, so that there should be no rain.\* In the passage now before us, we read of an actual fulfilment of what had thus been prophetically threatened. They had been so punished repeatedly, long before the time of Jeremiah; but they had refused to be corrected, and continued to practise their abominable idolatries, without showing the least sign of shame or remorse. The Lord had graciously espoused them to himself, in the most endearing relationship of spiritual communion, and addressed them in these and similar words, *Thy Maker is thy husband!* The singleness and simplicity of their devotion to him, are therefore spoken of as the faithfulness of a married wife; and, on the contrary, their defection from him, and joining in the superstitious worship of any of the idols of the heathen, are denounced as the vagrant infidelity of an

\* This threat was repeated, Lev. xxvi. 18, 19; and Deut. xxviii. 23.



harlot. Of this they had been grievously guilty. Every high place whereon the altars of the idols were built, bore witness against them. They were zealous in their wickedness; waiting for, and hasting unto opportunities of idolatry, as the Arabian robber in the wilderness waits with impatient anxiety for the passing traveller; or as the abandoned prostitute sits in the public way to entice and entrap the unwary.\*

\* The zeal of men in false worship, wilfully pursued, has ever been remarkable. There is something in the circumstance of its being self-imposed, which gratifies their pride, and thereby prevents them from feeling pain in the various sacrifices and mortifications which follow: especially, as those sacrifices are afterwards proudly and self-complacently referred to, as proofs of their sincerity. It will always be found, however, that such zeal is not scrupulous as to the means which it uses.

These remarks do not apply with more characteristic faithfulness to the ancient pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and were yet negligent of the weighty matters of the law, *judgment, mercy, and truth*; than they do (it is with grief unfeigned the application is observed) to some of our modern schismatics.—See *Letters* vii. and ix.



Therefore, the showers had been withheld from them, they had no *latter rain*, and famine stared them in the face.

Here again it is abundantly evident, that the expression *latter rain* signifies literally, the vernal rain upon the land of Canaan, and nothing else.

V. The next passage in which we meet with the words is Jeremiah v. 23, 24. "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth *rain*, both the *former and the latter* in his season : he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

"Rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons," are appealed to by the apostle Paul, (see Acts xiv. 17,) as witnesses for God, even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexcusable in their contempt of him. Still more inexcusable were the Jews in neglecting the plain testimony of these providential mercies : and in the passage here quoted, the prophet exposes that inveterate rebellion of heart, to which such stupid obstinacy must be ascribed.

The special point, however, for our present observation is, that *latter rain*, as used by the prophet, signifies, and can signify, nothing else, but the literal vernal rain upon the land of Canaan.

VI. The next passage wherein the words occur, is Hosea vi. 3. "I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early; (saying,) \* Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us AS the rain, AS *the latter and former rain* unto the earth."

For the sins of the nation, God withdrew his favour from them. Amongst other calamities consequent upon this desertion, rain was withholden from their land, and a famine was the result. If then under the pressure

10\* "The lxx. join the concluding verse of the fifth chapter to the first of the sixth, and not improperly, by adding λεγοντες.—Scott.

of their affliction, both spiritual and temporal, they recovered a sense of their dependence upon God ; if they recognized his hand in their calamity, and trusted to him alone for returning mercy : if they acknowledged their transgression and implored his forgiveness : and if they persevered in the path of sincere penitence, and strenuous reformation—then, the Lord would hear them, and lift up the light of his countenance upon them, which was always ready as the morning ; and then his returning favour would be *as* precious to the experience of their afflicted souls, *as* the showers of the former and latter rain are softening and fertilizing to the chapt ground.

Here again we recognize the *comparison* which is instituted between the favour of God returning to the people, and the showers of rain descending upon the earth. And here again we perceive, that the expression *latter rain* signifies, and can signify, nothing else but the literal vernal rain upon the land of Canaan.

The process here referred to, of provocation on the part of Israel, chastisement and

remonstrance on God's part, repentance and reformation on the part of Israel, and renewed loving kindness on God's part, was frequently repeated. "Many times did he deliver them: but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity: nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry, and he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." (Psalm cvi. 43—45.) At last, the iniquities of the nation became excessive: they were driven from the land, and the land became a barren wilderness. He who had long borne with them, and sent them one messenger of mercy after another, in vain; last of all sent unto them his Son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' He came among them: he spoke to them of the Father's love, and patience, and willingness to save: he did before them such works as none other man did, such works as only God could do; he pleaded with them: he wept over them: in vain, in vain! They conspired against him, and crucified the Lord of glory. Then was wrath poured forth upon them, to



the uttermost. The fearful prediction of Moses was fearfully fulfilled. "Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee until thou be destroyed. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies; thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth." Deut. xxviii. 23—25. *See the whole chapter.*

Such is the existing state of things. Modern travellers bear witness to the peculiar barrenness of the land, and we behold the nation scattered throughout all the kingdoms of the world. Scattered but not lost: miraculously preserved, in the midst of all nations, and distinct from all, to endure, and to survive the righteous judgment of God. In the end, mercy shall triumph. The nation shall be restored to her land; and the land to more than its ancient fruitfulness under the abounding showers of the former and latter rain. This leads us to



VII. The next passage in which these words occur, Joel ii. 21—27. “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you, the rain, *the former rain and the latter rain*, in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed.”

The first chapter of this book of Joel describes the desolate state of the land. “The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen, howl, O ye vine dressers, for

the wheat and for the barley ; because the harvest of the field is perished. . . . The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down ; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan ; the herds of cattle are perplexed because they have no pastures : yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate." The first eleven verses of the second chapter, describe the swarms of locusts, palmer-worms, canker-worms, and caterpillars, God's great desolating army, *as* the appearance of horses, *as* horsemen, *as* a strong people set in battle array. At the twelfth verse, to the seventeenth, there is a call to national humiliation, with directions how to conduct it, on the part of both priests and people. Turn ye even unto me, saith the Lord, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning : and rend your heart, and not your garments, &c. &c. " Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." Thus at the eighteenth verse, promises of restoration commence. Amongst these, returning fertility to *the land* forms a prominent feature ; and as condu-

cive, nay essential, to this, a promise of rain *the former and latter rain*, occupies, as might be expected, a distinguished place. (verse 23.) Then, instead of the harvest of the field perishing, the floors shall be full of wheat: instead of the vine being laid waste, and the oil languishing, the fat shall overflow with wine and oil: instead of famine, so grievous that even the meat offering and the drink offering were withholden from the house of the Lord, there shall be abundance, so that the whole nation shall eat in plenty and be satisfied.

Here, then, if the land be literal, and the restoration literal, so must the fertilizing rain also be literal: and the abundance of it, is expressed by both the former and the latter rain descending together in the first month. The former rain prepared the land for the sower, and the latter rain for the reaper: and the prophet Amos, predicting the same event, at the same period, uses these parallel expressions, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed!"\*

To those who deny the literal restoration

\* Amos ix. 13.

of the Jews to the land of their fathers, and the literal restoration of that land itself to luxuriant fertility, a wide field for discussion is here opened ; but to the minds of as many as admit these scriptural truths, the conclusion is, in all fairness, inevitable ; that the expression *latter rain*, as used by Joel, signifies literally the vernal rain upon the land of Canaan, and nothing else.\*

\* It so happens, that the party who are now endeavouring to strengthen their pretensions, by giving a figurative meaning to these words of the prophet ; have for their leaders, men who, but two years ago, were the prominent advocates of a rigidly literal interpretation. So much for consistency of judgment, when vanity and party spirit interfere !

The following quotation and fact, will supply another instance of inconsistency, the exposure of which, however painful, or even distressing it may be, on many accounts, is nevertheless necessary for the interests of the truth. The preface to "*The General Delusions of Christians*" concludes thus : " According to the forms and ceremonies of the church of England, to which her office bearers cling with far greater tenacity than they do to what is more essential, the prophetic voice could not be heard ; and therefore no minister who prefers his sect



But whatever may be your judgment on the subject of the restoration of the

to God, as most do, dare permit its utterance. Hence, the church of England must come down, in order to make room for it. But no Christian will assist in her destruction; God will pull her down; and the instruments he makes use of for such ends are not his own people, but his enemies. It was not Isaiah, but Sennacherib: it was not Jeremiah, but Nebuchadnezzar: it was not our Lord, but Titus, who destroyed the church of Judæa: it was not the spirit of faith, but the spirit of infidelity which has destroyed the popish imposture: and as he, and his disciples after him, continued to worship at Jerusalem after the temple was devoted to destruction, and a new dispensation was commenced, giving all due honour, to the very last, to those who sat in Moses' seat, *so is it the duty of Christians now, while justifying the righteous dealings of God in destroying that church and those pastors who reject his Spirit, and refuse to allow his Son to enter into his own house, to continue still to worship in the churches and to reverence its ministers for their office sake, if not for their own, until not one stone of her wall remain upon another; or unless, as is more probable, the Lord should have previously caught his disciples up to meet him in the clouds, to be with him as his assessors in the judgment, and his companions in breaking the nations, and*



Jews; a remarkable additional proof, that the latter rain, in this passage, cannot mean the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is supplied by the fact, that *in the verses immediately following this promise of the rain, the promise of the Spirit is given quite distinct, both in the language of its announcement, and in the time of its predicted fulfilment*; (verse 28,) “ And it shall come to pass AFTERWARDS, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men

the church to pieces, with a rod of iron. “ Even so come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.”—*Editor*, 1832.

Before the year 1832 had finished its course, this editor, instead of continuing to worship in the church, and reverence its ministers for their office sake; forsook and denounced the church, and opened a chapel for himself, in which he has been, and still is, officiating, as a dissenting minister. Whence this sudden change? Is the propriety of the parallel in the preceding passage disclaimed? Or, if not, has the editor joined that party, whose prototypes, according to his own showing, were Sennacherib, not Isaiah; Nebuchadnezzar, not Jeremiah; Titus, not our Lord?

shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions," &c. If the twenty-third verse contain a promise of the fulness of the Spirit, under the emblem of the former and the latter rain, then what means this twenty-eighth verse? But if the subject matter of the prophecy be twofold, the land and the nation; and if the twenty-third verse announce the fertilizing blessing upon the land, and the twenty-eighth verse the corresponding blessing upon the nation; then, all is clear, and consistent, and beautifully harmonious: and the prophet is freed from the charge of (and cannot be quoted as a precedent for) unmeaning tautology.

VIII. The next passage, in which the words occur, is Zechariah x. 1: "Ask ye, of the Lord, rain, in the time of *the latter rain*; so, the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

This is an exhortation to pray for the blessing, at the time appointed for the fulfilment of the promise. The time of this fulfilment is the time of their restoration. Then, all the predicted blessings shall assuredly be bestowed upon them; yet so as

that they shall be answers to their prayer. A parallel strain occurs in the thirty-sixth chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. After an enumeration of great and precious promises to the Jews, including restoration to their land, and the renewed fertility of the land itself, we find in the thirty-seventh verse, these words: "Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be *inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

And so in Zechariah, the restoration is strikingly predicted in the eighth chapter, both as it regards the land, and the people; "the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing." (Your attention is requested to the whole chapter.) In chapter ix. 1—15, are predicted the calamities which should befall other nations, when the King of the Jews took unto himself his long forsaken

people, *bent Judah for him, and filled his bow with Ephraim.* (Compare Jeremiah li. 19—24.)—Then follow, a repetition of the assurance that the Lord would save them, and a burst of admiration at the transcendent goodness of the Lord. “For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.” This fertility of the land implied the fall upon it of the former and latter rain, which were essential towards such a result. And for the fulfilment of this promise, they are, in the next words, exhorted to pray, “Ask ye of the Lord, rain,” &c. There is, however, another point in this passage, suggested by the verses which follow. They are exhorted to look *to the Lord* alone for promised blessings, and not to any of the idols of the heathen, on whom they had been placing vain dependence. In this view, the passage harmonizes with that expostulation of Jeremiah, “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens” (by any innate independent power of their own) “give showers? Art not thou He, O



Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things."<sup>\*</sup>

In either of these views of the passage, there is nothing to suggest any other than a literal meaning of the expression, "latter rain;" but, on the contrary, every thing to limit it to that meaning.

IX. The next, and only remaining passage, in which the words occur, is St. James v. 7, 8. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive *the early and latter rain*. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Nothing can be more simple, than the allusion here made to agricultural life. The patience of the husbandman, in waiting for the fertilizing showers of rain upon his fields, is set forth as a pattern worthy the imitation of Christians, in waiting for the coming of their Lord. In instituting this comparison, the apostle, himself a Jew, naturally adopts language specially applicable to Jewish agriculture; but it is obvious, that there is not the slightest reference in the passage, to

<sup>\*</sup> Jer. xiv. 22.



the Holy Spirit. You must, I think in fairness, admit this to be a strong feature in the case; that in the *only* passage of the New Testament, where the expression occurs, it is used simply in allusion to Jewish agriculture, and without any reference to the Holy Spirit, even in the way of *comparison*.

Thus, then, the induction is complete, and the conclusion irresistible. In the promise and warning of Moses, the poetical similitudes of Job and Solomon, the reproofs of Jeremiah, the exhortations of Hosea and Zechariah, the prediction of Joel, and the allusion of James—in other words, in every passage of Scripture, where the expression *latter rain* occurs, it signifies, literally, the vernal rain upon the land of Canaan, and there is no intimation in the Bible, of its meaning any thing else.

But, you will say, may not this, like other literal temporal blessings of the Jews, have a figurative, or emblematical, or typical application, to the christian church? And may not that application be to the outpouring of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit? The question is not what *may* be,

but what *is*. And all I ask is a scriptural scrutiny into every attempt so to accommodate the subject. Doubtless, a great analogical unity pervades the dealings of God with mankind, in all ages. Specially, a striking analogy, in many remarkable particulars, is declared in Scripture to exist, between the Jewish and christian dispensations. But in *what* particulars? Analogies, once admitted, open a wide door to the workings of imagination, and therefore it is no more than common prudence, in every sincere inquirer after truth, to exercise a most watchful jealousy over the *first step*. Had this caution been duly practised, and had well-intending ingenuity\* been controlled by a more rigid ac-

\* I subjoin a specimen of this ingenuity :—“ The whole dispensation is compared to fields sown with corn : the only two periods when rain from heaven is essential to the crop, are immediately after it is sown, in order to make it vegetate ; and again just before the harvest, in order to enlarge and perfect the ear : during the whole intervening period, rain is of little importance *In like manner* did he water his church with the dews of his Spirit immediately after he had planted it ; and now again, after a long season of drought, when the heavens have been

curacy of investigation, and a more scrupulous integrity of assertion, we would have been spared many of those melancholy exhibitions of vanity and bigotry which it is now our sorrow to witness.

In order to make good the assertions referred to on the subject of this letter, it must be *proved*, (to say it will not suffice,) first, that rain is used in Scripture as a type or emblem of the Holy Spirit :\* secondly, that the

shut, and the ground has been chapt, he is refreshing his inheritance previous to gathering it into his garner."—*Preface to "The General Delusions of Christians, &c."* p. xx. Here, first, an analogy is asserted; and then a statement is confidently made, which *seems*, to an unwary reader, to derive weight from the supposed analogy. The whole, however, is mere fancy, unsupported by any scriptural authority whatsoever.

\* It can be proved, with all clearness, that the Holy Spirit is spoken of under the emblem of *rivers of living water*. See John vii. 38, 39. We have, moreover, very satisfactory proof, that the holy anointing oil, described in Exodus xxx. 23—33, as poured upon Aaron and his sons, the chosen family of the priesthood, was a type of the Holy Spirit, with which God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, (Acts x. 38, Luke iv. 18,) and with which he anoints all

land of Canaan is in like manner used to represent the christian church: thirdly, that the *former rain* on the land of Canaan represented the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: fourthly, that the *latter rain* denotes specifically the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, revived in the latter years of the church's history, as distinguished from the "sanctification of the Spirit," which the church has possessed in all ages, and without which there could in truth be no church upon earth: and, finally, that the modern exhibitions, to which the scriptural phrase, "manifestations of the Spirit," has been rashly, if not profanely applied, are indeed those miraculous gifts. But where are the scriptural proofs of any one of these assertions? No such proof has been, or, I will venture to say, can be, produced.

the members of his mystical body, the chosen family of the spiritual priesthood. (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20. 27; 1 Pet. ii. 9.) But so far is this from warranting a similar assertion concerning *the rain on the land of Canaan*, that, on the contrary, the proof in the one case, and the total absence of similar proof in the other, constrains us to reject the assertion.



1. The ceremonial worship of the Jews contained a series of types, even "a shadow of good things to come." "The body was of Christ." The proof, clear and detailed, of this assertion, is supplied by the Epistle to the Hebrews, throughout.

2. The history of the Jewish nation, in their standing, their privileges, their responsibilities, and their fall, is used by the apostle Paul, as illustrative of the present standing of the christian church, and her duty of watchfulness, lest she also fall. "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear." See the whole of this remarkable chapter, the eleventh of the Epistle to the Romans. This analogy is carried so far, that the language of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, respecting the restoration of the Jews to their own land, is adopted by St. Paul, in describing the triumphant resurrection of the church, at the second coming of Jesus Christ. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written*, Death is swallowed up



in victory." This saying was written concerning the restoration of the Jews. Compare Isaiah xxv. xxvi., and Hosea xiii. xiv. If the analogy be pressed further, and an attempt be made, on the strength of it, to apply *the latter rain*, which is promised to the Jews, on their land, *after their restoration* : \* the legitimate result would be, that whatever is supposed to be analogous to the latter rain, is to be bestowed upon the church in her glory, after her resurrection from the dead. This, however, would be to speculate; and the hint is introduced here, simply to show, that even on their own principles, if fairly followed up, this analogy would defeat their present purpose.

3. The true spiritual church amongst the Jews, the Israel in the midst of Israel, possessed every blessing essential to salvation, in common with the christian church. *They*, on the credit of the work of Jesus Christ, fore-ordained of God, and predicted to their faith; *we* on the merit of that work accomplished, and preached to our faith. Penitence of

\* Joel ii. 28. It shall come to pass *afterwards*, &c. Compare this with the preceding verses. See p. 160.

spirit, pardon of sin, renewal of heart, the inward sanctifying and comforting energies of the Holy Spirit, willing and happy obedience to the commandments of God :—these are blessings, common to every true member, whether Jew or Gentile, of the ONE BODY of Christ's holy church.

Thus it appears, that some parts of the Jewish economy were *typical* of christian truths; some *illustrative* of christian privileges and responsibilities; and some *common* to both dispensations. It remains equally clear, that other parts were peculiar, or *exclusively Jewish*. Such were the land itself of Canaan, the fertility of that land, in milk and honey, in corn, and wine, and oil; and the instrumental cause of that fertility, even the former and the latter rain in their season, in which the christian church has no participation.

In the promise of the Holy Spirit, the church of Christ *has* participation, and that promise, as made by Joel to the restored Jewish nation, was distinctly applied by the apostle Peter, to the infant christian church, on the day of Pentecost. The apostle, on

that occasion, *made no mention whatever of the latter or former rain*, which was an exclusively Jewish blessing; but only of the Spirit, which is a blessing common to both Jew and Christian, and which is announced, as we have seen, by the prophet, in a clause totally distinct from that in which the rain is promised on the land of Canaan.

In the tract, which I mentioned in my last letter, there is this argument upon the subject.

You may object that Joel ii. applies to Israel and not to us. I reply, "*He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*" Rom. ii. 28, 29. And, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*" Gal. iii. 13, 14.

Again, if you say, the latter rain is not for us Gentiles, I reply, neither is the former; and yet, it is written in Acts ii. 33. "*As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost came on us at the beginning,*"

and both the Corinthian and Ephesian churches received the former. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv. ; Eph. i. 13. See also Acts xx. 23. And now I ask you to show me *any* specific promise of the Spirit made to the Gentiles. But if not, and you are forced to admit that they received of the *former* rain which was promised to *Zion*, then, they must equally share the *latter* promised also to *Zion*.

In reply to this, I observe, first, that,

If, on the strength of Rom. ii. 28, 29, Gal. iii. 13, 14, and other similar passages, we apply to the christian church *ALL* the promises made to Israel; then, to be consistent, we are bound to teach Christians to expect the possession of the land of Canaan. And, in fact, I have heard this maintained by some, who were so far faithful to the *principle* involved in this argument. If this be not maintained, if our scriptural hope be a glorious resurrection in the likeness of our Lord, and not an establishment in the land of Canaan; then a distinction amongst Jewish promises is admitted, and it is conceded, that one of them at least does not apply to the christian church. The promise of *the land*, therefore, *applies to Israel and not to us* :



and so does the promise of the rain upon the land, the latter rain, and the former rain.

When this writer says, "If you say, the latter rain is not for us Gentiles, I reply, neither is the former," I entirely agree in his conclusion. *Neither is the former.* It has no connexion with any thing beyond the land of Canaan. The texts adduced by him prove very distinctly, that the Holy Spirit is given to us Gentiles, but they contain no mention of, or allusion to the rain, either latter or former. When, therefore, he asks us to show *any* specific promise of the Spirit made to the Gentiles, we refer him to his own texts, to which many might be added, especially the words of St. Peter, concerning the gift of the Holy Ghost. "The promise is to you, and to your children, and to *all that are afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." But there is a great difference between a promise of *the Spirit* made to the Gentiles, and the promise of the former or latter rain made to the Gentiles. The one we affirm, and have shown scriptural proof of it; the other we deny for lack of any such proof.

This is, in truth, the turning point of the

entire mistake, into which this writer has fallen. He says, "*If* the rain mentioned in Joel, *be* the Holy Ghost," &c. &c. Without proving, or even attempting to prove, indeed without seeming to feel that there is the least occasion to prove, the affirmation of his hypothesis, he proceeds to argue upon it as an admitted truth. We do not admit it. I have explained to you why.

I am faithfully yours.

## LETTER IX.

## THE FACTS OF THE CASE.—CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR —,

You ask me, how then do I account for the facts of the case, seeing I deny the revival of the gifts of the Spirit?

What are the facts of the case? The apostle Paul, under the title of spiritual gifts, enumerates nine particulars, or diversities of operations, by which the Holy Spirit manifested his presence and power in the infant christian church. 1. The word of wisdom: 2. The word of knowledge: 3. Faith: 4. Gifts of healing: 5. Working of miracles: 6. Prophecy: 7. Discerning of spirits: 8. Diverse kinds of languages: 9. The interpretation of languages.

Now, first of all, you tell us that God

has once more raised his voice and put forth his power, to build up a church after the apostolical model, and thereby to seal the doom of all existing churches, which do, in fact, from the commencement of what you call the spiritual ministry, become synagogues of Satan. On this ground, you think you are doing God service, when you denounce me and my brethren in the church of England who oppose your pretensions, and hold us up to the reprobation of your followers, as ministers of antichrist. You call differing in opinion with *you*, opposing the Holy Ghost. You proclaim and reiterate, that beyond the pale of *your* spiritual church there is, and can be, no salvation. And many such things say ye.\*

Hearing such things, what was naturally to be expected, but that, upon inquiry, we

\* It is very possible that such things are not so flagrantly said elsewhere as at Albury; but here they are insisted on, in the most revolting manner. And the (supposed) spirits, here and elsewhere, are so identified by mutual testimony, that they must stand or fall together. Indeed, incomparably the most attractive of the party, has been a resident here nearly two years.



should find you arrayed in all the divine panoply of apostolical powers? Can you wonder then, my friend, at our lamentable disappointment, for what *are* the facts of the case? Words of *wisdom* and *knowledge*! Some of you spoke words of excellent wisdom, communicating useful knowledge, some years ago, before your present fancies had made you impatient of laborious study; but now such speaking is given up as carnal, as philosophy falsely so called, as man's wisdom, and mountebank oratory. And you now deal in trite common-place appeals, making up in sound, and other artificial stimulants, for the lack of substantial instruction.

*Faith! Healing! Miracles!* These were indeed, claimed at first, and confidently expected in attestation of the truth of the voice which had promised, among other things, "the signs of apostleship." But this claim seems now given up, (apostles indeed they have in name, but without signs, that is, men who *say* they are apostles and *are not*,) and given up, not without cause, after the signal and disgraceful failures which have attended certain attempts. Witness the poor gentle-

man who was carried from his death-bed to a prayer-meeting, in order to be healed, and carried back again to die. I had an instance in one of my parishioners, who was taught by certain gifted visitors, that her sickness was sinful, entirely occasioned by her want of faith; and that if she had faith, she would be well. One of these visitors prayed by her, *in the spirit*, as they told her, for her recovery on the instant. When next I saw her, she said to me, without any previous explanation, "Sir, does not the Spirit make intercession for us, according to the will of God?" I said, "Certainly, the words you use are the words of St. Paul." "Then, sir," she replied, "it cannot be the Holy Spirit in that lady, for she prayed for me that I might recover immediately, and I am no better." About a month afterwards, the poor woman died, as she had for some years lived, in the true faith and love of Jesus Christ her Lord.

*Prophecy!* This gift is claimed; at least, so far as it is understood to mean extatic utterances in the power of the Spirit, for the edification of the church. In its simpler

meaning of prediction of future events (confessedly more dangerous to be tampered with) it is not claimed; or if claimed, it is under conditions which divest it of the miraculous. The seeming predictions are said not to be decrees, not declarations of the purpose of God concerning things which *shall* come to pass, but only *warnings to faith*. If any event occur, answering at all to the prediction, prophecy in full force is claimed; if not, the failure is attributed to want of faith, and the credit of the predicting spirit is saved.

Upon the subject of prophecy unto the edification of the church, as now claimed, I have already written to you: and in reply to your question, how I account for the extraordinary utterances, I beg now to remind you, of the history of one individual who was hailed as a gifted person, whose utterances were boasted of, as in the highest degree powerful and searching, and who, in common with the others assembled in London, stood the test as applied by the letter of 1 John iv. 1, 2. I had a most animated description of this scene, at the time, from an eye and ear witness, who

spoke of the combined testimony of the gifted, to the glorious truth of Christ come in the flesh, as having been uttered "for about the space of half an hour, and in voices of thunder." The same person said, concerning the individual above referred to, she spake in great power in the Spirit, of the instant advent. In short, no argument derived either from the substance of what was uttered, or the mode of uttering it, or the overwhelming effect of it upon all who heard, can be applied with more force to any of the party, than to this individual; and you are aware that she has since confessed that she was acting a part, and that *the utterances in question were the result of previous secret preparation!* I do not say, that this proves all the utterances to be counterfeited: but I say it proves that utterances as remarkable, and felt by certain hearers at the time to be as powerful as any of the others, were counterfeited, and that therefore utterances which are now felt to be powerful, *may* be counterfeited. And I further say, that in considering how to account for the utterances, it relieves us from embarrassment of mind, while it substitutes a far more painful feeling.



*Discerning of spirits!* This gift is not claimed, and if it were, the facts already mentioned, would prove that hitherto it has not been exercised. You were very angry at us for not believing Mr. Baxter, when he said he had the Holy Spirit, in miraculous power, *making him* speak; and afterwards you would not believe him yourselves, when he wrote, saying he had an evil spirit. The truth seems to be, that in both instances he was deceived, not deceiving; that there was no *possession* in the case; and that had he suspended his publication, until the undulations consequent upon the storm of his excitement, had subsided, he would have said so himself.

*Diverse kinds of languages!* This gift is claimed, and has been claimed during the last three years, although nothing bearing the least affinity to any language except one, (English,) has been uttered at any time, by any of the party. The incoherent and unintelligible sounds, which you call a tongue, form no exception to the truth of this remark.

*The interpretation of languages!* This gift is not claimed. And doubtless it will



be soon enough to look for it, after some one or more languages are spoken, which need to be interpreted.

What then are the facts of the case? O! my dear friend, behold, on what meagre grounds you have been betrayed into a desertion, and condemnation, of the church in which you were baptized, and educated, and spiritually enlightened and comforted by our gracious Lord; and whose doctrine and fellowship you were enabled so long to adorn both in temper and conduct. Let me entreat you to retrace your steps. Consider the disappointment which you have already sustained. Two years ago, what were your anticipations? O, how high and glowing, concerning the effects to be produced by this voice! One of your heavy charges against the church, was, that she had "wrought no deliverance in the earth;" and this charge was advanced with a mixture of scorn at her, and triumph in yourselves, which clearly betrayed your sanguine confidence, that "THE CHURCH," as you termed your little secession, would work wonders. Have you no misgivings now, seeing that instead of work-

ing wonders, it is subsiding into the neglected insignificance of all its predecessors, in the path of schism? Be not ashamed to acknowledge yourself in error. It is a true saying of the casuists, that "a vow ill made, is worse kept." Do you find your present position slippery, requiring to be propped up by efforts upon which you did not calculate? Do you find yourself obliged to have recourse to doubtful explanations, and ingenious reconcilements of stumbling difficulties such as you would have honestly recoiled from, in the beginning of your course? I have heard of some such, with deep sorrow. O, my friend, let no party spirit warp your integrity of mind. Let no desperate determination to be consistent now at last, plunge you deeper into difficulties. Return, return, to your kind friends. Be assured you have lost nothing in our hearts, though we are compelled to set ourselves in opposition to your present course. I would give way to the earnestness of my affection for you, and plead with the instant pressure of unfeigned and anxious love. I would remind you of the many hours of christian happiness and

solid improvement which we have enjoyed in the prayerful examination of the word of God : of the mutual reproof, conceived and administered in tender care, by which we were enabled “ to consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works : ” of the calm and holy serenity with which some who were dear to us fell asleep in Jesus, cheered and refreshed on a bed of languishing, and in the approach of death, by our instructions in “ the good old way.”

But I must have done. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit !  
Amen.

I have transcribed and send you, two striking passages from Mr. Irving’s “ *Babylon Foredoomed, &c.* ” one of them, on the subject of the established churches of this kingdom, the other, on the subject of the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

“ It is further added, to the description of the sealed ones, as a church, ‘ in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God,’ or (as Griesbach prefers to read it) ‘ In their mouths was found no falsehood, for they are with-

out fault.' Which, though it may sound extreme to one unacquainted with prophetic language, does not surpass the Lord's manner of speaking, concerning the former church and chosen nation; which yet at no time preserved their fidelity so long, or so perfectly, as we have done. And to one who knows our churches only in their present state of feebleness and relaxation it may seem a very extravagant commendation, but to one who studies them *in the constitutions and documents which define their true character*, in the acts and testimonies by which, from time to time, they have sought to preserve themselves pure and blameless, it will not appear extravagant: for writings more in the spirit of the holy Scriptures, and forms more in the spirit of the primitive church, and prayers more in the celestial vein, were never indited by mortal pen, and have only to be occupied by the spirit in which every man undertaketh to occupy them, in order to make the church of the sealed ones that very thing which this description represents her to be—"without falsehood in their mouth." (vol. ii. pp. 348, 349.)



“Now he shall have a right view of the Apocalypse, or revelation made to John in Patmos, after Jerusalem was overthrown, who regardeth it in the stead of a succession of prophets, and comforters to the church, under all the trials, with which she was to be tried, and tribulations in which she was to be brought, until the second coming of the Lord. It pleased God to deny unto the latter church, the privilege of a succession of prophets; for when the Most Holy was anointed, the vision and the prophecy were sealed up: but *instead thereof, he hath established a gospel ministry, who should not speak from immediate inspiration, or prophetic foresight, but be stewards of those things which had been revealed by the Prophet of prophets, and his inspired apostles.* The reason of which, I judge, is to be found in the spiritual nature of this present dispensation, which doth not admit any incarnation of infallible truth like the ancient prophets, but raiseth *every disciple* into the condition of being *spiritually* taught of the same good SPIRIT, who taketh of the things of Christ, and sheweth them unto our souls:—in order



that we might be delivered from the idolatry of men, and from all dependence upon man, into communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the working of the everlasting Spirit. It being, therefore, so appointed of the wisdom of God, that the church should have no Elijah, nor Jeremiah, nor Ezekiel, nor Zechariah, raised up from time to time in the midst of her troubles, to bring her express consolation and encouragement—that she might not be without a witness of the things that were to come upon her, until the second coming of Christ, in the long expectation of which she was to be long baffled and frustrated, it was in the spirit of our dispensation to give her a *book*, which should set open to her the succession of the trials and deliverances, which for her chastisement, and the world's bereavement, she should be permitted to pass through, until he should appear the second time to those who look for him without sin unto salvation.<sup>1</sup> (vol. ii. pp. 320—322.) Our friend M—, from whom I have just heard, says, “The Lord will come to destroy the man of sin, the fourth, or Roman empire, whoever may

head it, infidelity or the papacy. And there will *then* be a pure church, and miracles will attend *that period*. Irving, and his followers, have anticipated the event. The enemy has caught them in that snare. Is it not so? They will soon find, in their new assembly, that tares and wheat will grow together till the harvest. And then, wherein are they better than others? By thus dividing, and *assuming what is not true*, they prevent the consideration of the second advent, unnecessarily divide churches and hearts, and do more mischief than they are aware of."

I am yours faithfully.

THE END.

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